DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 223 245 IR 010 514

AUTHOR	Broadbent, R. F., Ed.
TITLE	Education of the Isolated: Geographic and Cultural Aspects. Selected Papers from the Annual Conference of the Australian College of Education (22nd, Alice Springs and Darwin, Australia, May 14-20, 1981).
INSTITUTION	Australian Coll. of Education, Carlton, Victoria.
REPORT NO	ISBN-0-909587-18-3
PUB DATE	81
NOTE	123p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Australian College of Education, 916 Swanston St., Carlton, Victoria 3053, Australia. ($6.50 per copy, plus postage).
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Conference Proceedings (021) -- Viewpoints (120) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
EDRS PRICE	MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	*Access to Education; Educational Demand; Equal Education; *Ethnic Groups; *Extension Education; Foreign Countries; *Geographic Location; Open Universities; Rural Extension; *Social Isolation; Technology Transfer
IDENTIFIERS	Australia; *Distance Education

ABSTRACT

The 11 papers in this collection focus on isolation in education, with emphasis on problems associated with geographical remoteness, and with socio-cultural barriers also giving rise to isolation. Five papers concentrate on distance education and possible measures which can be used in social and educational processes to deal with isolation; readers are cautioned not to be too optimistic about technological solutions. The establishment of a national center for researching problems and solutions to the provision of education in rural Australia is described. The concept and operation of the Open University and its success in developing distance communication methods are discussed. Other papers consider barriers to education posed by cultural differences, language, social background, and socio-political structures. Four of these papers deal with specific areas of Australian isolation related to Australian Aborigines, in particular, and include reviews of specific programs and research projects. (Author/LMM)

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EDUCATION OF THE ISOLATED

Geographic and Cultural Aspects

Selected papers from the Twenty-second Annual Conference of the Australian College of Education held in Alice Springs and Darwin, 14-20 May, 1981.

edited by

R.F. Broadbent

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Published by

THE AUSTRALIAN COLLEGE OF EDUCATION
914-916 Swanston Street, Carlton, Vic., 3053

National Library of Australia Card Number and ISBN 0 909587 18 3

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FOREWORD

The twenty-second annual conference of the Australian College of Education was the first held in the Northern Territory. It was unique in another way, too, in that it was held in two locations — Alice Springs and Darwin — more than 1,600 km apart. This organisational aspect of the Conference, and some of the associated problems, served to highlight for many participants some of the practical aspects of the Conference theme **The Isolated in Education.**

This volume contains the major addresses from the Conference together with a selection of other papers presented and distributed. Unfortunately, it has not been possible to include any of the proceedings from the Alice Springs Conference session on case studies of isolation in Centralia. But perhaps it would have been impossible, anyway, to capture in print that memorable day, guided by Professor Colin Tatz, in which ten Northern Territorians shared their very different experiences of life among white people and Aborigines in the vast interior of Central Australia.

Professor Geoffrey Blainey introduces the Conference theme in an extract from his *Opening Address* and expands it to embrace social and cultural barriers as well as geographical remoteness. These aspects of educational isolation were extended by other speakers at the Conference and the present volume has attempted to group the papers into sections concentrating on education in remote areas and socio-cultural barriers which give rise to isolation in education.

Roby Kidd reminds us that isolation is a human condition. He presents an analytical grid which describes relationships between various factors determining isolation and possible measures which can be used in social and educational processes to deal with isolation. He concludes with a plea to ensure that distance education programmes are guided by principles of effective learning and not focused on the distance or the media used.

In his contribution Chris Duke makes a distinction between education and learning and claims that formal education is geared to the individual, not the community or group. In raising the question 'isolation from what?' he advocates that the community should be seen as the client of the educational agency. In a similar context he cautions against undue optimism about technological solutions to meeting the educational needs of the isolated.

Lord Perry's paper describes the concept and operation of the world renowned *Open University*, of which he was founding Vice-Chancellor. He outlines the success of O.U. in developing distance communication methods for tertiary-level courses and the extension of this into the continuing education field.

The concept of equality of educational opportunity is strongly evident in the philosophy of the Open University. It has attracted wide acceptance, too, in Australia over recent years which has resulted in a revitalisation of interest

in rural education. The *Disadvantaged Country Area Program* of the Schools Commission is one example of this. Another more recent innovation is the establishment of the *National Centre for Research in Rural Education* (NCRRE) at the University of Western Australia. Frank Darnell traces the background to the NCRRE and the potential it offers for understanding the problems and offering solutions to the provision of education in rural Australia. This is also the concern of Rory Treweeke, but his perspective is that of an educational consumer as the parent of children in isolated rural settings.

To some Conference participants problems of geographical isolation appeared more tangible than barriers to education posed by cultural differences, language, social background and socio-political structures. These latter barriers and the importance of colonization as factors in understanding education and isolation are taken up by Rex Nettleford in a paper which draws parallels between Caribbean and Australian experiences.

The last four contributions deal with specific areas of isolation in Australian education — those related to Aboriginal education. Beth Graham's and Maria Brandl's papers provide insightful analyses of deficiencies in traditional approaches to Aboriginal education. Both emphasize the essential requirement of providing educational programmes which recognise and respect social and cultural differences and which provide meaning and purpose for the Aboriginal children involved.

Ruth Sims has drawn on her long experience in Aboriginal community education to describe the development in the Northern Territory of education based on Aboriginal homeland centres or 'outstations'. Educational programmes based in Aboriginal communities in other States are reviewed by Bob Teasdale and Albert Whitelaw in the final paper. Six action-research projects are examined for their major outcomes and wider impact. They conclude that more progress has taken place in the last ten years than in the preceding history of white settlement, but that considerable advances have yet to be made.

Robert Broadbent
December 1981

OPENING ADDRESS

G.N. BLAINEY

Professor Geoffrey Blainey gave the Opening Address at the 1981 College Conference. He spoke first on the development of inland Australia, of the long Aboriginal history, of the white era of pioneering, and of some of the individuals who, despite their isolation, made remarkable contributions to fields of knowledge. The concluding part of Professor Blainey's address follows.

The European history of this land is the history of discovering and of the slow history of learning. There is also a sense in which the history of this land, both Aboriginal and European, has been the history of isolation. We in this gathering are the descendants of people who immigrated from northern Europe or central Europe and we have long been conscious of isolation from our ancestoral homeland. The process of adjustment for us has been painful and often slow. Likewise in this continent the isolation of the interior and the isolation of many distant parts of the coast from the peopled parts of the temperate zone have had a profound effect on our history.

Australia was remote from Europe for much of its history, and many commodities and many people were affected by that isolation. But strangely we imported ideas relatively quickly and easily. We imported, from Europe, books and newspapers, novels, sermons and sheet music, without great difficulty. We easily imported our prejudices and our preferences.

A delay of two or three months doesn't usually kill important ideas or important arguments. In contrast three months' delay, in addition to the cost of transport, imposes a huge financial burden on commodities, especially heavy commodities. The cost of distance will often choke commodities, and prevent them from reaching a market at a saleable price. The freight on the carrying of people is also high, but usually the freight or the charge imposed on the carrying of ideas is cheap. Ideas travel lightly.

In outback Australia the penalty imposed by isolation isn't always as uniform or as heavy as we imagine. Of course there are penalties and nobody is more conscious of them than the Northern Territory's government. Children in Tennant Creek and Rum Jungle don't have the same educational opportunities as those in the capital cities of the coast. Aboriginals in many parts of the Northern Territory certainly do not. Adults don't have access to the same variety in radio and television and in the weekly and the daily press. Some communities have no television. And yet I think it is true to say that since 1900 the carrying of news and ideas in the Northern Territory has been improved much more rapidly than the carrying of minerals, food-stuffs, meat or any other bulk commodities.

Ideas travel easily; but ideas, like commodities, need roads and tracks and rails to travel along. They need their own highways. Radio and television are wonderful highways for ideas but in the outback they are exceedingly costly to build. Admittedly, once built, they may be relatively cheap to operate.

How do we build and finance long educational and cultural highways to isolated groups in the Northern Territory or in Western Queensland? I assume

that this issue will be rising again and again at this conference. It won't easily be answered. And what of the short highways — the avenues of communication to those who live next door or in the next street? Or the short highways to the deaf or the blind, the highways to the bed-ridden and the house-ridden, to the migrant who knows no English? And who, in this vast territory, will build highways to the member of a minority religious sect craving for the company of his fellows, or the highway to the enthusiast of a minority art form or craft?

It may well be that the key educational and cultural problem of the Northern Territory in the long term is closeness rather than distance. It may be that the key problem for the Northern Territory and for so much of Australia is nearness more than isolation.

Here, for example, are two cultures and two civilizations, Aboriginal and European, standing side by side in many parts of the Territory and the adjacent regions. The distance between those cultures is short but the barrier is sometimes high. The barrier, often, is not distance but ignorance. Two feet, or the length of a child's arm can be a long distance to stretch. The length of a child's arm can be a forbidding distance if education and the media are not sufficiently directed to spanning that distance between black and white.

I think that in the last fifteen years, on many fronts, remarkable progress has been made in the links and the understanding between Europeans and Aborigines. What I am about to say is in no way a criticism of the Northern Territory — I haven't been here since 1962. Moreover, their problem is our problem.

We have made great progress in trying to build black and white into the one Australia, but we still have much to do. We are slowly learning the lesson that money isn't everything. For a long time we believed that by putting money into the white problem or the black problem or whatever you like to call it, the problem might be solved. Often Australia is criticized for how little has been done to help the Aborigines. One field I am interested in is the arts, and here an Aboriginal has infinitely more chance than a European of receiving a government subsidy. In the arts in Australia the federal subsidies to Aborigines are on a massive scale, if we note what cultural minorities receive in most parts of the world, and yet many of the Aboriginal arts remain imperilled. Likewise, it was announced in the press today — and I think the figures are correct — that the public money which is spent on the medical treatment of the average Aborigine is now far larger than the public money that is spent on the average white Australian. We have come to the stage of realizing that money alone does not solve all problems, and maybe that is an important realization. For a long time in education it was believed that money would solve all problems. It can certainly solve many of them, but not all.

Many of our social problems are blamed on the schools, but I think that the weakest link in improving understanding between Aborigines and Australians has been the universities. Universities have been extremely slow to teach the long black history of Australia. The universities have been slow to

teach anthropology, and many university anthropologists have regarded their knowledge as private knowledge rather than as public knowledge to be spread in the community at large. The media likewise must bear much of the responsibility.

Let me put to you a simple proposition. Will we remain — do we deserve to remain — a nation occupying an entire continent? In the next sixty years the Northern Territory and several other northern regions of Australia will possibly challenge that simple fact which gave the early Commonwealth such pride and our generation such security: a nation for a continent and a continent for a nation. Speaking as an orthodox Australian, and therefore with a fair amount of nationalism, I think it would be preferable for us to remain one nation embracing the whole continent. Whether it is better for the world I can't be sure, but the world will ultimately have a large say in whether we retain possession of this entire continent.

It is possible that in the long term the Northern Territory will challenge the unity of Australia. It is possible in the long term that the Aboriginal population here will overcome the present high rate of infant mortality and experience a period of very rapid growth. It is possible, in certain circumstances, that in the year 2030 the Aboriginal population, or those who see themselves as Aboriginal, will be nearly as numerous as the European population, or at least be a substantial minority which wields great political power. Aboriginal power will be accelerated if by chance the economic development of the Northern Territory is impaired and fewer Europeans consequently come to settle here, or if race relations should have phases of bitterness which deter people and capital from coming to the Northern Territory. Likewise Aboriginal political power in the Northern Territory will be enhanced if more Aborigines from the rest of Australia move here and make it their homeland. I am not saying that this will happen; I am saying that this is possible. One even has to think of the possibility some day of the Northern Territory seceding from the Commonwealth.

If relations between Australia and Indonesia become strained, as occasionally they will, Indonesia might well give strong support to a black independence movement in the Northern Territory. Many Australians who called in the 1970's for the removal of Indonesians from East Timor, and they may have been morally correct, perhaps do not realize that the day may come in the 21st century when Indonesians call for white Australians to leave the Northern Territory.

The Northern Territory, therefore, has yet another problem of closeness. It is close to Indonesia and to mainland south-east Asia. Its future will be greatly influenced not only by the way in which black and white Australians treat each other but also by the way in which all Australians come to terms with people from Indonesia and south-east Asia. Our long northern coast is not easily policed or guarded, and we cannot even be sure whether we have the will to police it. I am not even sure how far we should guard it and police it in a shrinking world. And who can predict the pressures uninvited immigrants will impose on that coast? Are the boat people from Vietnam a passing procession,

a temporary event, or is their coming to Australia a sign that in periods of turmoil perhaps hundreds of ships will arrive in our harbours with Asian immigrants. And if they arrive will we send them back? I cannot answer this question with confidence. It is nonetheless a question of importance to the Northern Territory and indeed to all Australians.

I am by disposition an optimist: I am not an alarmist. I believe that as a nation we will solve our long-term problems, but if we don't solve our problems, our problems will solve us. They will dictate their solution to us.

We should not minimize our problems as a nation. We should recognise the possibility that in the long term the Northern Territory, or north-east Australia or north-west Australia, will become national sore spots. There is even a possibility that the Northern Territory someday will become a separate independent nation living in uneasy relationship with the surrounding Commonwealth of Australia, and even living, maybe, in relative poverty. I am talking about long-term possibilities. I don't think these are crisis issues at present but many issues become crises because people do not take them seriously at that early stage when so much can be done to palliate them.

"SOME NEW SYMBOL FOR THE SOUL" — LEARNING NOT JUST DISTANCE

J.R. KIDD

Introduction

In what I call an overture, I have introduced three elements:

- Indian Chief Dan George reminding us that what is the condition of the isolated may be a condition of us all.
- Tanzanian President Julius Nyerere stating that development is of man and is for the liberation of all men, freeing them from their isolation.
- Guyanese Amerindian singer David Campbell's message that the wisdom of the isolated should be shared and extended, even to us.

In other words, we are talking not just of mopping up or patching up, ameliorating some of the deficits associated with the isolated and solitary, although the deficits may be real and crippling, but understanding that there is both need and potential achievements associated with solitary people.

In one of Judith Wright's poems, she says:

> Wounded, we cross the desert's emptiness
> and must be false to what would make us whole.
> For only change and distance shape for us
> some new symbol for the soul.

The enquiry on which we are launched is not just to provide a welfare cheque to scattered isolated or alienated, but perhaps to find healing and wholeness from them, as well as from our own solitudes within.

We also share the fact that many of your chief isolates and ours — your Aboriginal people and our Indians and Innuit people — seem to have a positive attitude and understanding and a way of relating to the environment that all of us need desperately to learn.

So much for my goal or my hopes. My main plan is much more direct and pedestrian — to take up and build on the fine address of Lord Perry about media that can overcome distance and isolation. I shall deal with *open access learning*, or *distance education*, where the focus is primarily on the learning and education — not so much on distance or the carriers.

Isolation and Humanness

To begin, I wish to go back to some discussion of isolation, and the isolated. It is necessary to do this because isolates differ markedly in their needs and the kinds of education directed to them must correspond to need. I have developed an elementary grid to indicate some aspects of isolation and the possibility of dealing with it by education and training. I acknowledge, of course, I am simply restating, that we are all isolated, that isolation is part of our humanness — isolated I came into the world and isolated I leave it —

living, learning and dying are solitary acts. I am making a second simple point that in the examination of problems and solutions associated with the isolated we may ourselves have much to learn.

Isolation may have and often displays malign consequences to which we will address ourselves. In *Les Miserables* Victor Hugo was writing of various kinds of heroism:

> Life, misfortune, isolation, abandonment, poverty are battlefields which have their heroes: obscure heroes sometimes greater than the illustrious heroes.

It is possible that the heroes of isolation and the lessons learned by the isolates, particularly respecting man and nature, as well as courage and trust, may be invaluable for all of us. For this enquiry on which we are launched the windows should be kept wide open for positive effects, not just be a blind crusade against damaging alien forces.

Isolation is a concept that Canadians we well as Australians understand — at least in part. I was recently reviewing some of the Canadian poetry of the nineteenth century and it might well be sub-titled "The Poetry of Isolation". Many of these poets echo Australia's A.D. Hope, though not always with his penetration of the human spirit. They could appreciate, in several senses,

> You cannot build bridges between the wandering islands
> The mind has no neighbours

Our earlier writers sound more like Christopher Brennan:

> A bitter wind came out of the yellow-pale west
> and my heart is shaken and fill'd with its triumphant cry.
> You shall never find neither home nor rest: for ever you
> roam with stars as they drift and wilful fates of the sky.

Compare with the Canadian Charles Mair:

> Great prairies swept beyond our aching sight
> Into the measureless West, uncharted realms,
> Voiceless and calm.

Much Canadian verse is bitter and profane, spitting out anger at the harshness of nature, not unlike your early drover when he discovered in the morning that nineteen of his twenty cattle were dead:

> That's nineteen thou has taken Lord,
> And now you'll plainly see
> You'd better take the bloody lot —
> One's no damned good to me.

Many aspects of isolation must be approached through economic and political measures, such as in the extreme, relocating some isolated individuals and groups who cannot possibly be served adequately where they reside, and by providing jobs or economic supports. But for other problems, a well-considered program of education may provide part of the solution and a strategy for decision making.

The Analytical Grid

In the following grid some of these relationships begin to surface. However, a grid at best is only two-dimensional and this one entirely omits time factors and how persons and social processes change, enlarge, alter their course, and may contract, dip and soar over time. I might have represented these relationships more adequately by using a cube, but even that has its limits because all lines in a cube are straight whereas, in life, most lines have disturbing but beautiful curves. Still, let us see what can be discerned from putting our data on a simple grid.

For ease of expression and comparative clarity, I have chosen ten perpendicular factors that determine or affect kinds and forms of isolation as well as ten horizontal factors that may be employed in dealing with the isolated. Moses did not give my decalogue; I choose it for convenience and because ten factors are about all that I can easily hold in my mind at the same time. You may have additional factors to add.

I have labelled these conditions or attributes as factors of isolation. All can be found in some situations though not always affecting every individual or group. I am sure that you can name others. The complexity of what we are discussing can be better appreciated when we understand that these are not separate factors but are constantly mingling, interacting, reinforcing.

It would also have been possible to cite education as one of the factors that affect isolation. The amount of formal education one has, its character and the values associated with it move the possessor towards participation or towards isolation and to support or not to encourage participation by others. However, since I am planning to use education and learning as a control or modifying influence in dealing with isolation, I have not included this factor in the list.

Factors Determining Isolation

1. Geographic Remoteness

This is the factor to which the conference is giving primary attention. There are island dwellers (as people live in Japan on 3,000 separate islands) or people in valleys in the hills, or in arid lands. In total they may number a hundred and fifty million people yet each of them, or the sub-groups, are treated, and may perceive themselves, as few and special, *pas comme les autres.*

2. Ethnic

Factors of ethnicity, national or cultural origins, the degree of "specialness" of one's group, are deeply influential.

3. Social Class

One does not have to be a convinced Marxist to appreciate how class affects one's behaviour or self-understanding as a functioning participant, or as an isolate. The loneliness of certain sub-classes has long been a theme for novelists and film-makers. Theories abound which try to explain alienation,

Factors Determining Isolation	Measures for Dealing with Isolation									
	Organize the Isolated	Increase General Communi-cation	Increase Under-standing of Isolated	General Improve-ment Communi-cation Skills	Special Communi-cation Skills	Train Isolated for Service	Media that Transcend Distance	Methods of Distance Learning	Increase Human Dignity	Isolated Reach out Beyond Isolated
Geographic Remoteness										
Ethnic Groups										
Social Class										
Language										
Language Handicaps (Illiteracy)										
Age										
Sex										
Physical Characteristics (Normal)										
Physical Characteristics (Handicapped)										
Self										

and sometimes isolation, in terms of class. It is also far too evident that many families who are low on the social-economic scale (low social class) also lack much formal schooling, much effective job training or capacities for good vocational performance.

4. Language

People are bound together, or feel themselves alone and separated, by language. In a time when millions of people are migrating few bonds are so welcoming and few barriers are so restraining, as language. How one speaks, one's accent, can reduce or deepen alienation. In *The Magic Mountain,* Thomas Mann writes: "Speech is civilization itself. The word, even the most contradictory word, presumes contact — it is silence which isolates."

5. Language Deficits — Illiteracy

The factor of spoken language is noted in the above. The other side of the coin is illiteracy, the lack of or inability or incapacity to use well the mother tongue, or a second language, or a special language such as mathematics, or a computer or music.

6. Age

Age factors have always affected isolation or its reverse. Because of major demographic changes and because persons in some age cohorts are sought after as buyers in most markets, while others are disregarded, because so much sophisticated nonsense has been said and written about generation conflict, because some cohorts tend to be confined in age ghettos, what was always an isolating factor has been intensified and has had dire consequences. For the deepest kind of isolation comes when a person chooses to remove himself from his fellows. This factor will have consequences in more countries during the balance of the century.

7. Sex

The popular literature has been replete with references to sex conflicts and the isolation of one sex from the other. This recurring factor is increased in impact by the tendency in many countries for conflicts to increase between homosexuals and the so-called "squares". Deep and fearful isolation, "living in a closet", has always been one of the most harrowing features of the life of some homosexuals.

8. Physical Characteristics (Normal)

Physical attributes such as height, weight, left-handedness have always been factors affecting isolation, even within what might be called the normal range. The clubs for the over-weight or for girls over six feet tall, or the left-handed, all of which are growing in number, indicate how painfully isolating these factors can be.

9. Physical Characteristics (The Handicapped)

This is the year that has been selected by the United Nations to attract world wide attention and understanding for the plight and isolation of the handicapped. Like the geographically isolated, handicapped people are usually

conceived of and treated as constituting a few special cases, when in total they may number hundreds of millions of people.

10. Self

There is an isolation, experienced by all of us some times, and by hundreds of lonely, alienated people much of the time, in which we may lose touch with ourselves or our continuing identity, in which we hide, and distance and withdraw, some of us for relatively short periods, others for lengthy durations, even a life-time. For most, the rhythms of distancing and rejoining are "normal", for others the problem requires counselling, therapy, re-education and improved support systems.

Some Measures for Dealing with Isolation

I will now deal in a very elementary, indeed superficial way with some of the measures that can be utilized in a social and educational process to deal with isolation. I have acknowledged earlier that many other activities or forces than education are needed but here our attention is focused on measures affecting learning. My attempt at this stage is to begin to classify; more subtle distinctions will be made later. The list is somewhat arbitrary and not yet complete, and you may wish to add or subtract.

1. Organize the Isolated in Ways that Lessen the Deficits of Isolation.

Examples of organization of a gross, total community kind are the Innuit villages in the Western Arctic, founded about fifteen years ago for people that had been traditionally nomadic, and the Ujama villages in Tanzania. Examples of some sub-groups for isolates are ethnic societies, cultural groups, the "timber toppers" (for women six feet tall), all of them intended to help isolated people have communal experiences and obtain mutual support.

2. Increase Inter-Communication between Majorities and Isolates.

This can take many forms. Extending press and broadcasting are two important services that need to be sustained. However, far too often the mass media flow only in one direction whereas two-way communication, or interaction is required. In most of the geographically isolated groups, indeed most developing countries as well, no attempt has been made for a constant flow of communication from the isolated to the others.

3. Increase Understanding

Increased understanding (not criticism) of the isolated for the general public, within the isolated groups themselves and between groups of isolated.

4. Improve Communication Skills

General attention to and improvement of the skills of communicating for all people through education, languages, uses of media, use of computers, etc.

5. Special Communication Skills

Education and training of many people in special communication skills such as indigenous or tribal group languages and arts.

6. Training the Isolated

Training of personnel from isolated groups to provide needed services to the isolated, particularly counselling, training, health, legal services.

7. Media that Transcend Distance

Development, refinement, and distribution of media that can reach out and transcend distance and isolation.

8. Distance Learning Methods

Development of methods, techniques, and learning principles that utilize media and special delivery systems for educational media.

9. Increase Human Dignity

Increase all measures to advance human dignity and human rights: only in this way is it likely that the special rights and responsibilities of the isolated will be given full opportunity for expression.

10. The Isolated Reaching Out

Opportunities for the isolated to offer service to others and not be locked inside their own ghetto or group.

Analysis

I have no intention of carrying out a comprehensive examination in depth of all of the relationships revealed on the grid. However, a number of important matters are quickly seen in high relief.

First, an examination of the factors that modify isolation immediately leads to some qualifying questions about the meaning of isolation for the isolated, what relationship exists between isolation and alienation, or with loneliness, and to what extent the isolate wills and chooses to be isolated. One could invest the full time allotted to this conference in examining some of these questions. They are all significant to a reflection about educational solutions to the problems associated with isolation, particularly the questions about how many will themselves their isolation, and on how many is it forced or operating in part contrary to their will. There does exist a more general phenomenon, of people retreating from life and seeking loneliness, (as described in such books as Philip Slater's *The Pursuit of Loneliness*).

There have been examples of people in Canada, Australia and elsewhere who seek such a vocation as lighthouse keeper, for whom one companion is crowd enough, and who may be constantly "moving on," always travelling away from more peopled communities or experiences. But reflection about the above ten factors causes me, at least, to conclude that the large majority of the isolates did not specifically choose their place or position or status of isolation, and will welcome some efforts to establish new bonds of communication.

A second matter, equally worth exploration but not to be pursued in this paper, is the considerable difference between a person who has a sense of identity, has a sense of belonging to a group or society but is temporarily or

permanently cut off from the largest numbers of that society compared to an individual who lives for himself/herself, lives within the space of a separate existence, makes little use of and has little contact with communal goals or norms. The philosopher Jacques Maritain was recently comparing the person with the individual:

> "In the modern social order, the person is sacrificed to the individual. The individual is given universal suffrage, equality of rights, freedom of opinion; while the person, isolated, naked, with no social armour to sustain and protect him, is left to the mercy of the devouring forces which threaten the life of the soul, exposed to relentless actions and reactions of conflicting interests and appetites . . . It's a homicidal civilization."

It is probable that many individuals choose their isolation but that many persons are isolated without choice. While Maritain alleges that the cards are stacked against the "persons", it is precisely these people for whom a program of education may be most effective.

Third, it is clear that several of the educational activities, such as organizing the isolated, increasing and improving general communication, increasing understanding of the condition of the isolated, increased measures for promoting human dignity, and encouraging the isolated to serve others than themselves, are significant regardless of which modifying factor one is considering. However, it is respecting the other educational inputs where there is a differential response that may indicate where the most important steps need to be taken.

From examination these steps are:

- the development and improvement of media that can overcome and transcend isolation.
- the development of methods and techniques for effective distance education.
- the different impact when personnel from the isolated group or community provides essential services to the community.
- the training of isolated personnel for serving the isolated.

I shall now comment on some of these subjects, prefacing examination with some rather obvious observations about increasing attention to human dignity. Moreover, since Lord Perry will be dealing with the problem of media and delivery systems, I will not trespass in that field except to make some reference to newer, or soon-to-arrive media that may affect future plans and actions.

Education Not Just Distance

Two years ago some of us completed a report on education in the Canadian Penitentiaries, a report which contained over a hundred recommendations. Only last month, the Director of the National Service said to me:

> "I now understand what you have been trying to say all along. I have been concentrating on your recommendations, trying to identify priorities. Now I have just realized the simple, single, central point that you have tried to register, is that a penitentiary must be perceived, conceptualized,

envisaged, as a learning community, as an educative society — not just as an environment for retribution and punishment — and that shift in paradigm or concept will affect every other single thing and decision about the penitentiary, starting with the appointment of the commissioner."

That is one of those principles easy to state and requiring lifelong expression to achieve. But it is true, and the same thing applies to distance education. Distance education is a process of stimulating and delivering experiences where people live or work or choose to be, in which the entire process, every step and component, is guided by effective learning principles.

If you apply that kind of a definition, there are a few examples of distance learning I know of in Canada that might qualify in a rough way but only one where the goal and effort are conscious and sustained. The impact of that *outreach* program, emanating from a community college in Northern Ontario, is not only on high achievement by the learners but in changed behaviour and performance by the teachers as they go back to their own classrooms. A comparison between it and some of your interesting outreach programs in Australia might be instructive.

Distance Education and Self-Directed Learning

A good program of distance education starts with some process of consciencizing and continues to offer the learners opportunities for counselling through which they become increasingly more able at self-initiated and self-assessed learning.

It involves human and social interaction and support as well as individual and personal engagement. It is not dependent on any particular medium. Studies have shown good results or poor results irrespective of what forms of media have been used. In general, use of several reinforcing media seems to result in greater learning.

But clearly, it is not the magic of media, but the way they are used, that produces a result. In the office next to mine, sometimes deafening me with sound, with cable tentacles sometimes snaking over the divider into my space, is *Telidon*, the latest miraculous form of two-way interaction with data banks. *Telidon*, which is already regarded as the best of the inter-active systems, is being daily refined in its output and use, and in some ways is now becoming as good as a blackboard and soon may become as good as a book!

Most broadcasters and media producers (there are some marvellous exceptions) don't understand the above comment and may be offended by reiteration of comments about educational methods and process because it seems to belittle and diminish their creative contribution. Of course the *quality* of a production is important, just as is having a medium that can reach out to people. Typically, softwear is far from adequate. But the whole process of education and learning must be seen and organized from an educational perspective. This is the *hallmark* of distance education: not media, not even quality of programs.

As people become better at self-initiated and self-assessed learning they can begin to manage, use, produce programs for their own media. It is hard for some educationists to accept this stage and encourage it. I have discovered in working with Indian and Eskimo people that it is as hard or harder for broadcasters and media producers to permit the isolated to have control over the mystical and sacred media. How can they? In fact, how dare they?

But increasingly, good programs of distance education will put responsibility for much of the delivery and program creation into the hands and minds of the isolated.

A feature of good distance education is that not only is there extreme care about the way that information is presented but the processes of assessment, decision-making, reflection, application, and considering alternatives are built into the program.

As one works in this way, as Allen Tough has done, one discovers that thousands, no millions of people carry on effective learning away from or outside of the influence of institutions. However, all such self-directed learners wish assistance in improving their learning skills as well as sources of information and skills. The role and opportunity for our institutions to influence the education of millions outside of institutions would complement splendidly their work for the thousands within their institutions.

It used to be considered that the range of learning experiences possible through distance learning was narrow — and might be likened to a monochrome. It is now apparent that the canvas of distance learning is as rich and glowing as the glorious blinding Van Gogh exhibition I witnessed just before coming here. Distance learning may begin to elicit and express some of the values of the learners, usually isolated in some form or sense. It may therefore become a vehicle of bringing into common use some of the special values and contributions of some of the isolated.

Make no apology for distance education, it can result in learning of the most impressive kind. But it requires attention and discipline and creativity by the learner and the teacher/organizer. Not everything called by the name deserves the name.

Some Examples

I am sure you have heard such talk before and what you may wish to have are some examples. I have chosen five, not necessarily the best, but to illustrate a range of possibilities and to exemplify my claim that everything we need to plan for is probably already in operation somewhere now. My five selections are drawn from my own recent experience -- activities associated with an Indian tribe and an Innuit village; activities derived from a university, a college and a national educational system.

I could have chosen a penitentiary, a program for the elderly, special programs for women in several countries. In both Canada and the United States there are community colleges organized specifically for Indian people. The full range is considerable.

1. Big Trout Lake

An Indian Band lives on some islands and on the shores of this aptly named lake, about a thousand miles north and east of Winnipeg, the nearest city. Formerly, this was a territory rich as a hunting and fishing ground, with timber to cut and wild rice and other crops to harvest. An increasing population and pollution from acid rain and other industrial wastes have brought new needs and threatening new problems, identified primarily as education, job training, clean water, waste disposal, food supply, health and sanitation. Until recently the source of most knowledge and skills about such matters has been the officers of the Federal Government; the considerable store of Indian wisdom has been forgotten or systematically obliterated.

The tribe has control over their own lands and as they began to believe that the advice and service given them by government agents seemed invariably to involve high cost and high technology (water, sewerage, food processing, health), whereas they knew that they needed low or intermediate technology, they determined to develop an educational-social action program under their own initiative.

Instead of bringing in government teachers, professors, and available distance education courses, all of them planned by experts in the south, they hired three animateurs and planners to work with them in the village in designing appropriate learning experiences. Experts in water technology, sanitation, waste disposal, community health were sought out and invited in, all of them men and women selected because they could work with and for the total Indian community. Courses were designed first for the Indian chiefs and decision-makers on policy questions and decision making, and to provide legal and technical information needed for policy decisions and negotiation with government. Other learning programs were designed for workmen and technicians to install, maintain and service pumps, as well as for sanitation and marketing the crops. Young technically-trained members of the band were selected to go away in small groups to observe how other communities carried out such services. Special seminars were given for all who needed them on how to understand and cope with bureaucrats in health units, water commissions, forestry, mining, fish, land use, etc.

For four years now these activities have been progressing, primarily in the local environment but with selected persons going out to study, on the condition that they will return to use in service the experience and knowledge of outsiders. A foundation in basic education is being attained, and in addition basic courses in english and mathematics, science and trades are being offered to provide educational and vocational training and up-grading for all tribe members who can be persuaded to take part.

Special attention has been given to the chiefs and the new leaders that are arising, to enable them not only to cope with complex problems but with a governmental bureaucracy that is only slowly learning to respect their leadership and to work with them. Outside experts such as engineers, who have customarily been sent to advise the Indians, do not readily cease to be advisors and become trusted employees of the band, but some have done so. What is

happening is not conventional distance education, although it does use distance media as well as a few correspondence courses designed elsewhere, but it is effective education for and by the Big Trout Band. In the process, very few of the key leaders have left the community and some Indians who had gone away earlier have returned.

2. Igloolik -- An Innuit Village

There has been some form of settlement on the island where the village of Igloolik now stands for at least 3,000 years but in all that time, until 1965, the people were wandering about following the caribou herds. Now these nomadic people have a settled home and the men, most of whom are still hunters of caribou, seals, walrus and the arctic char fish, will go out for three or four days on a hunt but return to a settled community, and to a wife and children who have been carrying on community activities. On the whole, these nomadic people have made an extraordinary transition surprisingly well, in part because of their special quality but also because of the educational process which they organized and follow.

The first part of the process is in large measure one of developing consciousness, followed by an improvement in general education and a selected number of skills for economic, political and social development, all under their own direction.

Capping the community social structure is a community council that meets weekly to make decisions about economic programs, administration of the marketing and consumers co-operatives, the school and the adult educational centre and programs of primary health care, how alcohol will be used and controlled, what kinds of communication by radio, newspaper, telephone, satellite, television, films will be permitted under what conditions, relations with the Federal Government officials, etc. The Council meets in a handsome Council chamber, designed by Innuit artists, surrounded by one of the finest collections of Innuit art to be found anywhere. The art would fetch several hundred thousand dollars in New York or Toronto; the people maintain it for themselves, as an aid for maintaining their heritage, traditions and belief in themselves.

The elementary/secondary school is as well equipped as almost any school in the south, offers education for the first three years in the Innuit language, and provides general and well-organized vocational courses. Teachers in the first three grades are Innuit, and teachers in the older grades have had an average of several years service in the region, and some of them are being replaced as Innuit teachers become available. The Minister of one church (Anglican) is Innuit and that is the language of the church service; the Catholic priest is from the outside but changes are coming. An adult educational centre operates five afternoons and nights a week, offering general and vocational courses for older youth and women and men, about half of them in the Innuit language. Here people who are learning new vocational or administrative skills — processing furs, carving and painting, managing a fish co-operative, surveying and filing mineral claims, health care, nutrition, servicing machines

and electronic equipment, drafting reports claims and grievances — all obtain training, tutoring and practice.

Another feature is that the outside professionals who are appointed to work in Igloolik are selected partly on the basis of and are expected to demonstrate a range of general knowledge and practical skills, such as good nutrition, recreation, managing, lobbying with government, etc.

This community does not only receive standard Canadian radio programs, much of the radio offering is in the Innuit language and produced by themselves. The communication satellite which has been in daily use for a decade carries general telephone traffic, and vital information about weather, locations of caribou, seals, walruses, fish. Films are brought in and screened, but as noted earlier the community has chosen not to purchase or use television equipment until (they claim) the community council will be in a position to choose what programs will come in and, more important, co-operate with other Innuit communities in producing programs related to their own life and values. Television producers and service people for several such villages are now being trained and it is possible that most of the conditions established by the community council will be met.

Of course many problems remain. But the village elders are agreed that as much control as possible will be exercised over their means of livelihood, social life and values and are determined that education and the media will be used for these purposes, not to destroy them.

3. A National Campaign Reaching the Isolated — Botswana

Sometimes the isolated can be looked after well in a special program and sometimes in a national campaign. Some of the people of the Kalahari Desert in Botswana are still as isolated as any desert tribes but others have been reached and are finding a new life as the result of a national campaign directed to them as well as to rural people generally. The important decisions in this campaign were:

A. To create a single program for meeting goals of health, family planning, food production, marketing and management, nutrition, new job skills, processes for political participation, etc.

B. To involve related government departments, university extension, other educational agencies and secondary schools in the total program, utilizing combined services and resources.

C. To centralize the planning and administration in a single administration but place the program and responsibility in local administrative units, including tribal units, and develop materials with and by the affected people.

D. To utilize all available media for distance education, but employed for educational goals and under the control of educationists.

E. To have all personnel take part in the same orientation and planning

and all animateurs and program organizers go through the same training operation.

The result has been a campaign that has served multi-objectives in ways that have been reinforcing not competitive, where hundreds of people have had training in effective educational techniques, which has served well already advantaged rural people but also reached out to many of the isolated and which has used new as well as traditional technologies. Three examples are:

A. A major national program to revive an ancient weaving craft and establish a strong economic support for some rural women has been based on the skill in design of rural women. Themes and motifs for design have been African history and creativity, exploitation of blacks and especially of women, and good health practices, so that the tapestries have not only been a source of consciousness raising for the weavers and their families but excellent teaching devices for basic education throughout Botswana.

B. For the illiterates, picture books were used to initiate discussion and oral classes. Rural people were accustomed to photographs but not drawn pictures: the picture books were made in the locality with actual photographs of real conditions and the example was then followed by other communities in all parts of the country.

C. One of the animateurs, from Canada, was using video-tape in a process developed in Canada known as the *Challenge for Change* program of the National Film Board. In the process he would videotape discussions of major needs and solutions in one village and take it to animate a similar process in another remote village. In so doing he discovered what consummate actors are the Botswana villagers, so, instead of relying on videotape, he began to transport a truckload of citizens to go with him from one village to the next who would act out anew their discussion — thus re-discovering the rich educational uses of sociodrama and ensuring that the subject matter would be ever fresh and changing, yet focused on real needs. Incidentally, many people everywhere are discovering the power of the arts and theatre, including puppet theatre, for social education and action.

It is probable that from this common base of education and training in Botswana the special needs of the most isolated and handicapped bush people will require a program designed with their unique conditions in mind. However many of them, and some villages, have been participating in the national program.

4. A College Outreach Program in Northern Canada

The geographic area served by Confederation College is about the size of France: the college is located at Thunder Bay on the southern perimeter, roughly corresponding on the map of France where you would look for Marseilles. If the College is to have any impact on the isolated communities, Indian bands and reservations, forestry camps and mining camps, it must do

so with distance methods. The *Outreach* program of Confederation College has been designed with that in mind.

College officials aware of adult education methods know that they can utilize well distance education for many needs and functions. But resources were limited and the decision was taken to start with upgrading the professional people who serve throughout the area and particularly to assist Indian and other people in the area to qualify for, develop skills and experience in such service. Content areas were primary health care, nutrition, local resource use and management, environmental control; the personnel were nurses, doctors, secondary school teachers, engineers, company and government officials, and all those who perform at a paraprofessional level.

The chief distinction in this program was that it was agreed that every part of the process would be affected by the best that is known about good learning. I have spoken about this need earlier: this *Outreach* program is one of the best examples I know of what can be done, as well as of the signal difference in outcome when it is done. Evaluation has been made of information mastered, attitudes changed, skills and practices improved. In addition, very careful records of all associated costs have been maintained. It has been discovered that once a program — let us say a nutritional program for nurses and all other health workers, utilizing personalized materials (print, videocassettes, oral tapes) and some small group encounters, with extensive print resources and ample opportunity for practice, with information delivered by radio, telephone, television and the post — has been developed and tested, the program can be maintained at no additional cost using normal budgets already available to the College and the business or professional organizations. In other words, a program that has been well-designed and thoroughly tested, with some annual review and modifications, will serve effectively for several years with no extra charges. But development investment is needed, about $25,000, for such a program. Accordingly, for some years to come, new investment will be needed in the project, but these costs are comparatively modest.

It is interesting to note, in respect of equipment, that most of the scattered villages, band council halls, government administrative centres, mines and forestry companies, have at least one videocassette receiver. Therefore, most of the program materials are now recorded on cassettes which are shipped around the territory in planes, trains, trucks, by sleds and canoes. The videocassette, like the 16mm film in earlier times, may become a primary medium, at least in some countries.

Much of this experience cannot be applied to all countries or all conditions of the isolated. However, the central principle, of achieving excellent learning in every aspect and facet of the distance education process, is generally applicable.

5. Radio in the Hispanic Caribbean — Dominican Republic

One of the main achievements of adult education in Latin America is the use of radio for many purposes of non-formal education and now almost as an alternative to the formal system for many isolated people.

The first agency to initiate a strong program was ACPO in Colombia. Much that has happened in other countries is partly the result of the influence of this single well publicized project. In turn, the Colombian program was founded after the priest who was mainly responsible had spent eight months in Canada studying *National Farm Radio Forum*. He was intelligent enough, and stayed long enough, to discover what was the main function of *Farm Forum*, not just its organizational pattern. Therefore, when he returned to Colombia he initiated practices that achieved somewhat similar and better results but bore no resemblance to the organization of *Farm Forum* except that radio was the chosen medium.

Briefly put, most of these Latin American programs are linked to formal as well as non-formal education. They support and are used by teachers, priests and government officials, both for general education and for vocational training and citizenship. Sometimes, as in the case of a significant private operation, ICECU in Costa Rica, they are based on requests for information from local citizens, or children, or officials. Again, in this and other examples, the content, quality, and widespread distribution of well-produced print may be as important as the radio message, but it is radio that links up and sustains the interest of the learner in the whole program and puts her/him in touch with other sources of information and culture in the region. The programs are often multi-purpose and increasingly they are based on local cultural expression in music and sociodrama.

In the mountainous districts of the Dominican Republic it had never proved feasible to offer secondary education, although there were scattered primary schools. Some priests, aware of the experience in Colombia, designed a program that featured five elements, all of which were necessary to accomplish the aims:

- course work based on a central curriculum, and delivered several times a week by radio
- course and other reading material circulated to these remote districts by post even though rarely more frequent than once a week
- accumulation of some village collections of books, other print materials and some very elementary science equipment useful for local application or experimentation
- an itinerant teacher-animateur-tutor-counsellor who would try to reach each community, for two days at a time, at least twice a month
- a local administrator, or volunteer parent, who would help the individual participants to take part and continue in the project after using group and social supports, not just individual motivation.

With these inputs, estimated to cost no more than five percent of the cost of secondary education in the traditional way, many village people of ages 15-45 were able to prepare themselves for the national examinations in which, on the average, they exceeded regular students. Such a success, first in one highland region in the country, was replicated in other parts of the Dominican Republic. Next the process was applied to activities of literacy and vocational

training for adults and eventually to establishing an alternative in some mountain villages for the elementary school. In all of these applications, the same five aspects were maintained. It seems to be true from what information is available, that an alternative system that produces as good or better results at least on school examinations, and perhaps much better in practice, can be maintained for a cost that seems to be close to 8% of traditional schooling costs. Other Caribbean island countries, and those serving mountainous people, are looking to good distance education as either an alternative or as the main school system, in addition to scores of applications to non-formal education.

Media Technology and the Isolated

I have noted earlier that in the office next to mine in Toronto there exists, breathes, talks, speaks, *Telidon* — the pride and joy of Canada's electronic engineers, a videotext system that incorporates the most recent developments in computer graphics and telecommunication technologies. *Telidon* converts a simple television set into a powerful information tool which:

- can deliver educational experiences to anyone, regardless of location or time
- has an interactive capability that allows each learner to proceed at his or her own pace with periodic feedback on progress. Computer-assisted learning over a distance therefore becomes possible
- has a graphics capability which can provide a wide range of educational illustrations like musical score, charts, graphs and maps
- can provide pages of information that unfold at a controlled rate, focusing the viewer's attention and pacing the learning experience.

Whether these assertions by the Ontario Educational Communications Authority are true or not, I am not yet able to attest. But *Telidon* is a constant reminder to me that with microprocessors and other uses of such technological marvels as 'silicon chips' the impact of the newer media may be as revolutionary as has been threatened so often during our lifetime. We have been warned about media revolutions frequently and so dramatically that some of us have responded somewhat in the manner of the fable, *Wolf, Wolf.* Only this time, say some responsible colleagues, including Canada's Deputy Minister for Communications, this time there may be a wolf!

Ready or not for a technological revolution, at least three assertions can be made about media and the isolated. First, the satellite is a prime instrument for reaching the geographically distant. I used to think of satellites as playthings of rich governments and multinational corporations. But when the power is so strong that the message can be received by and even transmitted from thirty-six inch discs, remote tribal people can talk with each other as well as receive messages beamed at them. To my Innuit friends in Igloolik, the satellite is an instrument of daily use even though they have chosen not to have TV in their village in the next three years, or until such a time as they will have some control over the programs they will receive.

Second, the media need to be brought under some kind of social control, not just left to the multinational corporations, bent on profit, if programs are to be available for the isolated minorities in cities or scattered peoples. I am an educational consultant to a TV station in Toronto that broadcasts in twenty-four languages, but that function requires a special licence and authority and a will to serve these minorities. Educationists on the whole have not been astute enough politically to gain sufficient control over these powerful communication systems to use them well for education.

Third, the isolates, as in my village of Igloolik, need to have power over what they will see and experience, and some means of providing for themselves, and to speak to the majority, as well as exchange with other minorities. At the beginning, both educationists and broadcasters may find this situation and such participation in program making or use of the media difficult to accept but the results of a few experiments are reassuring.

Communication with and by the Isolated

It is obvious that some co-operation reaching beyond simple one-way message reception must be developed between the isolated and the wider community. Often, though not inevitably, there are serious cultural barriers to be overcome. This may take many forms. For example, the gulf is deep between North American whites and various tribal groups — perhaps less respecting other isolates (although women, the handicapped, homosexuals, or the left-handed may dispute this). An illustration of the gap is found when American social scientists have attempted to communicate with American Indians. The first and typical response of many Indians before someone who interferes in his affairs is to withdraw, and most social scientists are unable to understand what has happened. Rosalie Wax reports:

> "We regret that some of the social scientists are among the least perceptive persons in this particular matter. We have seen a social scientist of some repute attempt to initiate a discussion with Indians by suggesting that they no longer possessed any culture of their own but were unrealistically clinging to an impoverished 'reservation' culture. What they ought to do, he went on to say, was to leave the reservations and become assimilated. When this remark was received in expressionless silence, the scientist suggested that this 'lack of response' supported his point for no-one present had been able to defend the existence of their culture.
>
> On another occasion a psychiatrist whose initial overtures had been observed in silence by his Indian audience began to prod them with remarks intended to rouse their anger. The Indian men as usual made themselves inconspicuous. A few stole out of the meeting. But some of the women lost their tempers and the session ended in a loud and rather vulgar brawl.
>
> After these incidents we talked with both the white and the Indian participants. Both of the social scientists assured us that they had merely been trying to elicit a response from the Indians and the second seemed naively pleased with the 'discovery' that 'they'll only react if you get them

mad'. The Indians seemed to feel that it was best to ignore the whole thing. As one older man remarked: 'You do not take the words of an insane person seriously'."

Of course, such a barrier explains in part why education for isolates is often much more effective when conceived, planned, organized, animated and assessed by persons coming from the isolates. This seems to be as true of prison education as it is of the education of the Innuit, or the Bedouin, and the reasons are not difficult to understand. But most official procedures work against it. For example, in Canadian penitentiaries, there is an ordinance that one prisoner cannot be "in charge" of another which must be substantially modified if there is to be utilization of the excellent teaching talent of prisoners, person-for-person often much better prepared for education than any custodial personnel, and also accepted, wanted and trusted by the potential learners.

Service Personnel Recruiting from the Isolated

The principle of using personnel of and from the isolated, who will be trained to give service of many kinds to the isolated is as easy to understand as it is basic in development, and the slowness to implement the principle is a matter both for surprise and concern.

One of India's greatest problems, affecting everything else, is crushing population increase of millions more mouths to feed. This has been identified for at least two decades and some of the more recent measures of population control have been formidable and some results are impressive.

As long ago as 1965 it was noted in the state of Maharashtra that three factors must be present if there is to be substantial result in limiting births and increasing and improving standards of child and maternal health:

- A sustained imaginative program of public education and propaganda about the goals and outcomes of a population program
- A forceful propaganda program for men, utilizing primarily their work and social groups, to the end that they would cooperate or at least not interfere with the program
- Selection and training of thousands of para-professional women in addition to some women doctors and nurses, as the primary agents in the program.

It was, of course, the latter condition, without which little progress could be achieved on the propaganda front alone, that took time. If women were to be employed in these ways they needed, as girls, to have at least an elementary and typically a secondary education. In fact, success in family planning depended on success in providing education for girls.

This is just one dramatic example of the inter-relationships of social programs but also about the need for service people drawn from the concerned group. The general principle holds in most kinds of service for most isolates.

The problem, therefore, becomes one of early education, recruiting and training of potentially able practitioners. Distance education provides an excellent vehicle, not just for delivery of the social information but in the support of practical field training of the practitioners. Many of the significant uses of distance education have been in the preparation or continuing education of teachers, nurses, and health para-professionals, managers, equipment maintenance persons, police, political organization and public administration officials generally. As early as 1870 in my province, at least 60% of rural teachers in Ontario were obtaining their general education and teacher training by correspondence, and the principles of distance education are very much better understood and practised now.

However, professional personnel who come from minorities and who serve their own people need to have a combination of knowledge and skills not required in more conventional practice, as well as excellent field apprenticeship, and any program for this purpose needs to be planned and administered with great care, founded in large measure on the advice and experience of the isolated people.

Conclusion

Some things may seem so obvious that they did not need an international conference such as this for validation. One of them may be a shared sense of trespass towards the isolated of the world about which A.D. Hope wrote, in *A Bidding Grace:*

> For what we are about to learn too late, too late
> To save, though we repent with tears of blood;
> The innocent ruined, the gentle taught to hate,
> The love we made a means to its despair —
> For all that we have done or did not when we could . . .

However, I think that we have also strengthened our commitment as we have re-formulated our beliefs, our understandings of isolation and the human condition.

In some important respects all of us are isolated and must learn to cope with and utilize the strengths and values that arise from isolation while uniting in recognizing the dignity and desperate need of those for whom isolation has brought loneliness, deprivation, alienation.

The isolated deserve and require basic human rights just as do all human beings but are also minorities who require special attention. Thought might now be given to the possibility of a period of recognition, perhaps an international year, for all of the isolated.

The primary need of the isolated is the raising of their own consciousness — to appreciate and value themselves and their potentialities as well as their interdependence with other human beings. But also they have special practical needs of jobs, transport, communication, food, basic health care.

The isolated deeply need to reach out for recognition and stimulation from outside, but the most effective forms of education can and probably must be planned, managed, assessed, controlled by the isolated, for some of which special training is needed.

A century may be needed to alleviate some of the problems of the isolated, problems which have developed over at least a thousand years but many urgent problems require attention during the few remaining years of this century.

The isolated require the most powerful and penetrating forms of distance communication and also methods and techniques that achieve education, self-initiated learning and two-way communication, not just a one-directional delivery system.

Again and again we have encountered paradoxes, some of them of deep resonance and poignance. The truly human person is enlarged by alternate phases of withdrawal and togetherness, is crippled, weakened, incapacitated, paralyzed when reduced to aloneness or lost in a mass. In this and other ways the person seems to mirror human experience. Carl Rogers put it well:

> "How does it happen that the deeper we go into ourselves as particular and unique seeking our own individual identity, the more we find the whole human species."

Again and again we have noted that despite their losses and disabilities, the isolated often express and reveal truths and attitudes about nature, the environment, cultivation of the spiritual, as well as attributes of courage, tenacity and enthusiasm that are needed by all. "Only change and distance shape for us some new tremendous symbols for the soul".

IN RECEIPT OF LEARNING?

C. DUKE

Introduction

I am asked to discuss, somewhat briefly, what the isolated learner does with what is learned, or what is transmitted by distant forms of education, for learning. I may stray into the territory of those who follow in the programme and consider the social impact of education, since I have difficulty in making this distinction in trying to answer what I judge to be the important questions.

I must, however, first emphasise that education and learning should be clearly distinguished. The work of Tough (1971) and other Canadian colleagues of Dr Kidd has demonstrated quite convincingly that the large majority of adults' learning activities have nothing to do with deliberate educational provision, whether formal and accredited or of an adult or non-formal kind. Whatever else distance education does, it should not reduce or detract from people's capacity to learn.

We can with meaning speak of group, organisational and societal learning. Formal education, however, is geared essentially to individual learning, and this is true also for the bulk of education for adults. Distance education opportunities designed to bring learning opportunities to the geographically remote individual child or adult may be counter-productive, or maladaptive, in terms of solving societal problems of isolation, for these need to be solved at the level of the remote community and its needs. If we do not think in terms of the education and support of communities we may help some individuals to escape but exacerbate the situation of those who remain.

In a meeting concerned with the theme of the isolated in education there is a tendency and a temptation to think of technical solutions. There is also a danger of slipping into a kind of technological determinism and to overlook the possibilities of community participation in making decisions about different technical configurations and financial/technological options. I will return to this in a moment in referring to the Australian domestic satellite.

There is another danger, which might be entangled with the question of technical configurations and the use of individualised and mass media for remote communities. This concerns possible assumptions about gains to the outback through more, and more diverse, external study opportunities. In Australia the position is now that we do not have, and will not get, an open university. The Tertiary Education Commission is concerned about the proliferation of external courses and in its recent report for 1982-84 suggests curbs on any further expansion. (At the same time it records a very significant increase in external as well as part-time enrolments.) The poor man's alternative to an OU, a National Institute for Open Tertiary Education, was discarded with the other costly dreams of Labor in the mid-seventies (Australian Universities Commission, 1975). Leave it to the market, we might say. The quest for students on the part of educational institutions will enhance educational services in remote areas and administrative and entrepreneurial ingenuity will find ways to reach geographically isolated populations. In

practice the boom in external students appears to be mainly a service to the isolated (in one or another of the many senses of that word) in the *metropolitan* areas. The handfuls of students in the outback, on pastoral properties, in Aboriginal townships, even in small mining towns, are not an attractive market from the institutional perspective.

Isolation and Technology

Back to technical determinism. We will during this decade have a domestic satellite, which Tony Staley presented to us — I believe in all sincerity — as a service to remote outback Australia (A.N.U., 1979). There are many possible configurations for a satellite, some allowing low-cost interaction between remote communities which could determine their own interests and needs for use of airspace. Political rather than economic considerations suggest that the first *Domsat* will not be of this kind but, in its ownership as well as design, will further promote homogenization and massification. National networking of metropolitan — or overseas — generated programmes will reduce isolation but not enhance choice. This is likely to be presented in technical/economic terms, but we should be clear that the choice is not based in technology, but in political considerations and the preferences of interest groups more influential than those of remote Australians.

The Department of Communications is giving consideration to a needs survey of remote Australian communities, and its permanent head has come out publicly voicing the kinds of concerns I have just mentioned (Lansdown, 1981). The question is: what kind of survey? Does one start by assisting communities to articulate their educational and other social problems and needs, including those which might directly or indirectly be conceived as 'communication needs', and then seek to devise a range of technical arrangements, within what the society can afford, to meet those needs?

The more common approach by technocrats and bureaucrats alike is to say 'this is what we can give you' or, if community consultation and needs studies are favoured, still to say 'here is the kind of technical options we can afford to provide to you — which two or three will you choose?'

Learning Contexts

All this may seem a long step from what isolated people do with learning. Let us come back to the learner. Is it the individual adult, or school student, or the whole community — and if the latter, what sense of meaning are we giving to 'community'? For what purposes is the education being provided, or transmitted, and in what context of needs and motivation is it being received?

I spoke earlier about learning other than of individuals — by groups, organisations and communities. A recent report to the Club of Rome, *No limits to learning*, emphasises this and also the importance of the different contexts in which learning occurs (Botkin, 1979). Especially with the cultural diversity which ethnically plural and geographically vast Australia experiences, we should beware of treating individuals entirely apart from their local communities. We should also not assume that the formal education system

and non-formal, adult education will always remain different enterprises with different purposes and arrangements (a persisting theme of the Unesco Regional Office for Education in Asia and the Pacific), and that only the non-credit, adult education sector can be concerned with community education. Indeed 'community education' is a confused term used in many different ways. Its recent use in Australia has tended to stress greater access to and use of the school premises by the local 'community', but it can also mean education (of kids or adults) taking place *in* the community and the development, through education *of* communities (see *e.g.* Haines, 1978).

And we should ask again the important, if tired old question, education for what?

There may be an assumption, which I think Roby Kidd challenges, that isolation is necessarily undesirable, an affliction. In what senses is it bad? The new settlers in rural Victoria, northern New South Wales and upcountry Queensland inland from the Sunshine Coast and further north think otherwise. A recent *National Times* piece, recounting the attempt of 100 international photographers to capture the essential Australia in one day, records one such overseas visitor on his Pilbara assignment who mixed with greasy, tough, exhausted mine workers (and who found himself shaken by the beauty of the desert): "they looked mean but you could poke a hole in them; they were vulnerable. They were city guys, who'd come for six months and got hooked on isolation and stayed years." (National Times, 1981).

Another such photographer, whose assignment with the flying doctor took him to Mornington, was most struck by Australia's two cultures — and this brings us to the more familiar stereotype of the outback. "The coast culture is rich like California or Sweden, but the people in the centre are more or less lost. On some cattle stations they don't even have television. They wait for the flying doctor to bring news of the world. That's crazy."

How crazy? It is not my place to idealise or romanticise the outback — that has been done popularly enough by Colleen McCullough (1978) in *The Thorn Birds*, for one — much less outback Aboriginal Australia. But is California to be our yardstick for cultural wealth? If so, then the defeat of isolation through Packer-style national networking is clearly the answer, and if we can grab a channel or some airspace for 'educational broadcasting', so much the better.

Isolation and Reality

Isolation from what? Who defines what is culture, or rich culture, what is good living or quality of life? If "the centre" — by which I mean Sydney or Canberra, not Alice Springs or Uluru — is to dominate, then the farther one is from there, the more one is isolated and deprived. That is a race the outback, by definition, can never win. All it can do, with increasing and eventually exponentially rising costs at the margin, is to try to reduce its disadvantage. But to some Aboriginal communities in Eastern Arnhemland, not even Yirrkala, much less Darwin or Canberra, is the centre: the centre is the homeland; and I see from the first annual report of the new Northern Territory Department of Education (1981) that the homeland or outstation

movement, on which administrators poured scorn and scepticism in the early days, spells out ways that the Department is facilitating homeland or local community-based education according to the needs as articulated by those communities. This I consider a more viable road to the defeat of isolation than the uses to which our first domestic satellite is likely to be put.

More than that. So long as reality is defined by "the centre", whether this be down South or in Canberra, in Darwin or even in Alice Springs (depending from where you are viewing), isolation will be resolved only by littoral depopulation or surrogate depopulation through cultural centralisation and homogenization, in a world which looks rather like *The Private Future* as sketched several years ago by Martin Pawley (1974). Paulo Freire (1972, 1976) has written about the culture of silence and poverty, in which culturally marginal groups accept or internalise the negative images and stereotypes of them held by those in power. While this applies conspicuously to Aboriginal Australia, which is only now beginning to emerge from its culture of alienation and silence imposed by white settlers, it may be applied with equal relevance if less dramatically to the other minorities which comprise northern Australia, including wealthy pastoralists as well as itinerant mining community workers. Peter Berger's concept of consensual reality identifies what I am referring to: that the world and one's place in it is defined, determined and valued (or devalued) according to the way it is seen by those with whom one interacts (Berger, 1971).

I have mentioned Freire and Berger. To these let me add the names of Illich, before moving to my conclusion. Most people are by now familiar, however superficially and with whatever measure of distaste, with Illich's critique of educational and other institutions. His plea in a nutshell, as applied to our present theme, would be not to let education interfere with and destroy learning. If we agree that the South, or Canberra, is the centre, that reality is defined there, we contribute to a consensual reality according to which isolation and the isolated (in the geographical sense) are inevitably disadvantaged and all we can afford are palliatives. Aboriginal leaders moving back to the homelands would not, I believe, have much difficulty with Illich's position; nor, maybe, would the miners mentioned in *The National Times* who got 'hooked on isolation'. Do we feel sorry for them or try to understand them?

Northern Territory and Educational Provision

I mentioned the first report of the Northern Territory Department of Education just now. The creation of an independent Department on 1 July 1979 is relevant to my theme. So is much that is reported as happening in the Territory. If political developments have put Darwin on the map and edged Canberra aside, so has the practice of bringing here international and national meetings like this present one, which the Report also mentions. The creation of a Territory Teaching Service may reduce staff turnover and transience. I have not the time to list all the relevant developments in that Report, which include many outreach and distance forms of education like the new Secondary Correspondence School based in the new Dripstone High School building, and the 'kids convoy' group which travelled over 4,000 km in a year to bring

cultural and creative experiences to people in different parts of the Territory. Both of these involve a face-to-face element, as does the facilitation provided by the Department to homeland Aboriginal schools, and of course human contact as well as radio contact, access to the mass media and correspondence packages, are all ways of making isolated living more palatable to many — not all — who live in geographical isolation.

The kinds of questions my approach implies are about decentralisation and diversity of provision in education for the outback, whether school or post-school. I have been critical of the Aboriginal residential colleges in the past for their unintended cultural imperialism destructive of individuals and communities; it may be that their negative features have now been in part removed. The institutionalisation of bilingualism seems to be a very important administrative step towards affirmation of diversity, and a more effective defeat of negative isolation than many more obvious arrangements for distance education. If the Department can remember the lessons of management from Canberra and respect the needs for self-affirmation of Alice Springs and Nhulunbuy, and if these centres of management can recognise that to others they are the central bureaucrats possibly threatening diversity at a more local level, then isolation may be largely overcome and learning facilitated by the redefinition of isolation, and of where the action is at.

What, then, do those who are 'isolated in education' do with what is transmitted to them? What is likely to facilitate, and what to debilitate, their learning?

The Community as Educational Client

We must again ask the question 'education of whom and for what'. In *Design for Diversity* several years ago Sommerlad and I suggested that at least in remote Aboriginal Australia the community rather than the individual should be perceived as the client of the educational agency — the government department (Duke and Sommerlad, 1976).

If living in remote areas is defined, by the way we treat it, as a form of penal servitude, all we can do is lessen the disadvantage and shorten the time. The emphasis then is on individual learning and advancement, so that kids, and older people, are not seriously and permanently disadvantaged in competing for jobs in the general Australian labour market. Universality rather than diversity acquires salience. Individuals are given the best access budgets and delivery systems can afford to general curricula, skills and qualifications, and there is major emphasis on individual scholarships to study in Darwin or down South. The pathway clearly leads up and out. For those who remain, we have the prospect of rich culture, probably from California interlaced with home-televised sport, beamed into most of the other-than-very-remote and other-than-very-poor homes: one can draw the curtains and it is just like being in the suburbs.

Mass communications and educational delivery, with or without an explicit mass media partnership, can thus conspire to foster further homogenization as

a way of reducing the sense of isolation and the resulting supposed disadvantage. This seems to me a less than satisfactory scenario for the future of northern Australia, and a quite inadequate definition of what living in isolation (whether Darwin, Galiwinku, or somewhere more remote) is about. The effect of such a view and practice on the isolated community and individual will be to create or increase dissatisfaction with a rural or remote township lifestyle and accelerate the flight of those able to get out.

I am not arguing against enhancing learning opportunities for individuals by all possible means — correspondence, isolated allowances, external studies, equivalencies and recognition of work experience, radio or teletutorial hook-up, or whatever. I am, however, asking what definitions we put upon living away from the metropolises by the way we go about this, what consensual reality we are fostering and hardening, what we are doing to the indigenous (not just Aboriginal) learning and the communities of the Centre and the North. One does not have to be a Freire or an Illich to feel some disquiet on these scores, in looking where Australia's people are going, and its wealth coming from, into the nineties and beyond.

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THE OPEN UNIVERSITY

LORD PERRY

The Concept

What is now the Open University was first conceived as the University of the Air. It was first spoken of in public by Mr Harold Wilson in a speech in Glasgow in 1963. Thereafter it became a child of Miss Jennie Lee who convened a Parliamentary Committee to study it; and this committee's report was published as a White Paper in 1966. The most important recommendation of the White Paper was that which proposed the establishment of a Planning Committee to give detailed study to the whole matter.

The Planning Committee was a non-political body set up under the chairmanship of Sir Peter Venables, Vice-Chancellor of Aston University, and composed almost exclusively of academics. It began work in September 1967, by which time the name of the new institution had been changed from the University of the Air to the Open University. In January 1969, it published its Report to the Secretary of State for Education and Science, a report which was at once accepted by the Government.

The original name, the University of the Air, laid, it was considered, altogether too much emphasis upon broadcasting, implying that this was the main, if not the only, medium of instruction. This was not, in fact, the concept. Rather was it the idea to produce integrated courses making use of all media that would assist in the teaching/learning situation, but making use of them only where there was clear evidence of an academic need for them. Television would be used only where there was an academic reason for visualisation, not just because it was available as a new and exciting medium. Thus some courses might be devised which made no call whatever upon television but which were provided solely by correspondence and radio. The name, the Open University, was chosen as a descriptive one in two senses — the broadcasts would be on open circuit and entry would be open to anyone without formal entrance requirements.

Thus the idea of an Open University was first promoted by politicians and then by government. It was not a child of the educational establishment which, indeed, was almost uniformly sceptical and largely hostile to the concept. So indeed was the quality press, the civil service, the Conservative Party, and many of the intelligentsia. They expressed themselves as sympathetic to the primary objectives (although I take leave to doubt if the sympathy was always genuine) but raised such questions as:

Would there really be a lasting demand?
Would there not be a drop-out of over 90% as in many correspondence courses?
Could anyone actually be educated without face-to-face contact with academics?
Would it not then be extremely expensive and open-ended in cost?
Would it not appeal largely to the bored elderly middle class housewife

who would make little contribution to the needs of society even if successful?
Would the courses not be in "hobbies" — like so much of adult education?
Would not any qualification be second-rate and therefore useless?
Was the need not much more for extension of pre-university education?
Could the job not be done by the existing universities?
Could the money not be better employed by expanding existing adult educational services?

As F.M. Cornford says in his classic guide to the young academic politician, *Microcosmographia Academica*, "There is only one argument for doing something; and the rest are arguments for doing nothing". And all these questions are arguments for doing nothing. What then was the argument for doing something — what were the primary objectives of the Open University?

It was designed to offer a second chance of higher education to all those who for any reason had been denied or had not taken advantage of the opportunity of higher education after leaving school. It was to make no compromise on academic standards but it was to make access easy. The latter principle demanded three things, first that there should be no qualification required for entry, second that the costs should not put it beyond the reach of the poor, and third, that the method of study should take education to the student, who could remain in full employment living at home, and should not take the student to education in an institution.

It was therefore absolutely essential to adopt, as an article of faith, the idea that the traditional face-to-face methods of education were not necessary and could be dispensed with. There was, indeed, little evidence to support that faith. Correspondence education had almost always failed, in that the success rates usually ran at under 10%. In fact the one striking exception to this was to be found in Australia in the remarkably successful external programs of the University of New England at Armidale. Television and radio were recognised as useful ancillaries to the traditional pattern, but could not be envisaged as substitutes. Was it possible that a combination of all these, together with any other distance communication methods, could work?

The learning materials that had to be developed must be of very high quality and well presented, for, if a student got stuck, access to a tutor could not be easy — so that remedial face-to-face help would often be unavailable or available only after a delay. Second, the isolated student could not rely on the stimulation, competition or help that is derived from classmates in the traditional institutions. The loneliness of the long-distance learner is very real and his motivation will flag if the learning materials are not themselves stimulating, for they are his main contact with the University.

The Undergraduate Programme

Our first programme was the undergraduate one, designed to lead students to a first degree, a B.A. with or without honours. We started with six faculties: Science, Arts, Maths, Social Science, Educational Studies, and Technology.

All faculties except Educational Studies offer a multidisciplinary foundation course; students are required to obtain credit in two of these and then to gain further credits (six for the ordinary and eight for the honours degree) by choosing from the range of courses at half and full credit on offer. We believe that two full credits per year are the equivalent of full time study and thus we followed the Scottish pattern of a 4 years honours degree programme; England is virtually alone in the world in attempting to complete honours degrees in 3 years and succeeds only by imposing the A-level specialised sixth forms at school.

It became very clear, quite early in our work, that the major costs of our teaching lay in the initiation of new courses. Thereafter the direct cost for each student was comparatively small. We knew that it would be vital to our survival that we should keep our costs per student low, much lower than the figure for other universities. This would be doubly necessary if, as we expected, our graduation rate turned out to be much lower than theirs — for the cost per graduate would also be of political importance. Thus, to keep our costs low we had to restrict the number of courses that were offered. The only other way to keep the cost per student low would be to increase the total number of students in the university; but this, while reducing the cost per student, would also increase the total cost of the university.

The heavy constraint on the number of courses that we could prepare has been, throughout the decade, a source of long, anxious and sometimes acrimonious debate. Should we offer only those courses which attracted large numbers of students and eschew the unpopular ones? This would make economic sense and academic nonsense. In the end we decided that, given a total student population of 70,000, we could afford to offer a total of 87 full credit courses. This means that each course must, on average, be taken by 800 students; but since the Foundation courses are taken by many thousands of students we can afford to put on others for only two or three hundred students.

We regarded these targets of 70,000 students and 87 courses as our "steady state". We had hoped to reach it by about 1982 but recent events have led to a slowing down. It is, however, worth mentioning just a few of the statistics of this whole programme to try to get its scale in perspective.

In the first decade we have received well over 400,000 applications for entry to the university — an avergae of 40,000 a year. Over this same period we have admitted just under 1 out of every 2 applicants. Admission in the first three months of the first year is provisional and only about 75% of those entering actually decide to stay on, pay the fees and become finally registered students. In other words we encourage people to test the temperature of the water by putting in their big toes before asking them to dive in. We have, therefore, finally admitted some 150,000 students in the decade — an average of 15,000 each year.

Of those 150,000 some 45,000 have already graduated, 60,000 are still in the university and 45,000 have left without graduating. This last group are not

necessarily failures — they may have no interest in actually getting a qualification. There is a great deal of evidence to show that, in fact, well over half of these people, perhaps even two thirds, have been studying for the sake of studying and not with any vocational purpose. Many do not even bother to sit the exams although they have been excellent students. We cannot, therefore, quote failure or dropout rates. We can only quote success rates. In any one course that is offered some 70-75% of the students gain credit. This may well represent a 90% pass rate in the examination, the remainder deciding not to sit. This estimate of success rate has remained remarkably constant each year, although the rates for individual courses vary widely.

If one considers graduation rates, one is on much more difficult ground. I have carried out a cohort analysis — studying what happened to those students who entered the University in any one year (Table 1). The first cohort — those starting in 1971 — numbered about 19,000 finally registered students. Of these, 56% have now graduated and a few still remain in the university. Later cohorts show similar figures but with a slower rate of progress, taking about a year longer to finish. There may, however, be a falling off in the actual number finishing — only the future can tell.

Table 1 Open University Graduates 1971-1979

Year of Entry	1971	1972	1973	1974	1975	1976	1977	1978
No. of finally registered students	19,581	15,719	12,680	11,336	14,830	12,230	15,146	15,622
Graduation Year								
1972	4.6	—	—	—	—	—	—	—
1973	21.6	2.0	—	—	—	—	—	—
1974	35.1	16.6	1.7	—	—	—	—	—
1975	43.3	27.7	16.3	1.9	—	—	—	—
1976	49.6	36.1	27.9	17.0	1.6	—	—	—
1977	52.3	43.0	36.0	27.5	13.6	1.3	—	—
1978	53.9	46.3	42.6	34.7	22.3	12.6	1.1	—
1979	55.2	48.6	46.9	41.6	29.8	21.4	11.8	2.9

Graduation figures are percentages of fully registered students who have graduated.

The other statistic that is available is that the number of graduations in the last few years has been stable at about 6,000. This, expressed as a fraction of the average number of finally registered admissions, is only 40%. It may be that, because of the slower rate of progress, the number of graduations in later years will increase, thus raising the 40% figure to something nearer the 56% of

the first cohort. All we can yet say is that the average graduation rate will in the end fall somewhere between 40% and 60%.

Turning to the record of course production over the decade we have, with our partners the BBC, produced about 3,000 TV programmes each lasting 25 minutes and about 2,000 radio programmes of 20 minutes duration. The written material, specially prepared for the courses, amounts in all to the equivalent of over 500 books each of 200 pages. We have organised and run, over our 9 completed years, some 1,000 separate summer schools each lasting a week and each attended by several hundred students. Arranging for those in 14 centres over a 12 week period to cover some 40 academic lines is, to say the least of it, a complicated logistical exercise.

I thought I might summarise, after this very brief sketch of the development of our first degree programme, by showing you the way in which the cost per student has changed over the decade. The figures here are all given in pounds sterling at constant value, *i.e.* after adjusting for inflation (Table 2). The drop in the early years is due to economy of scale, *i.e.* to the increasing numbers of students, and the rise in the last year or two to the fact that we have gone on increasing the number of courses on offer although the total number of students has been held virtually constant. Overall you will see that we have managed to achieve our object of holding the cost per student constant.

Table 2 Average Cost Per Undergraduate Student

Year	Average cost per student	General index retail prices†	Average cost per student at constant* prices
	Pounds		Pounds
1971	331.00	80.0	909.00
1972	287.00	85.7	735.00
1973	280.00	93.5	658.00
1974	314.00	108.5	636.00
1975	369.00	134.8	601.00
1976	474.00	157.1	663.00††
1977	509.00	182.0	614.00
1978	576.00	197.1	642.00
1979	651.00**	219.6	651.00

* Mid 1979 Price Level
** Latest Forecast
† 5 January 1974 = 100.0
†† 1976 saw a rise of 6m Pounds in expenditure over the previous year but a rise of only 1600 in the Undergraduate student population.
Sources: Expenditure — *Annual Accounts.*
Student Population — *Statistical Bulletin September 1979.*

The Continuing Education Programme

The undergraduate programme was, then, our first task and has remained our priority task throughout the decade. Yet even in 1970 I was saying that a continuing education programme might become our biggest and most important contribution.

Although we have not yet completed the first degree programme, one of the main reasons why it was given such high priority has already disappeared. It was originally necessary to gain academic credibility. That has been gained. Thus it would be quite possible for us to concentrate instead upon the continuing education programme which some people — and I was one who shared the view — held to be the single most important objective in founding the O.U. It has become a truism to say that the pace of acquisition of new knowledge is still accelerating and is already so fast that everyone will require, in his or her career, updating, refreshment or retraining. One of the few ways in which such continuing education can be provided economically is through the O.U. system. This does not require people to stop work in order to go back to colleges; it makes maximum use of a small number of skilled teachers; and it is, in consequence, cheaper by far both in capital and in recurrent costs than any other system. The need for continuing education is recognised throughout the world; but such is the cost of and the vested interest in initial education that no country has been able either to afford to add a continuing education programme or to cut back the initial education programme in order to pay for it.

I said in 1970 that we hoped to begin a continuing education programme in 1972. It took longer than that to make any sort of start. We are now quite active — but in a very small way as compared to the first degree programme. The reasons are not hard to find. First, the priority of the undergraduate programme is still maintained — no-one wishes to stop short of completing it. Second, the continuing education programme is not subsidised by government grant. This rule was imposed by the U.G.C. for the post-experience courses offered by other universities. It was generally — and almost certainly correctly — held that employers would gladly pay the full economic fees required for their staff to obtain necessary updating or retraining. It was also often true that no significant expenditure was met by the universities until the fees were paid, so that no problem of cash flow arose; nor was any risk capital involved since the course could be cancelled if not enough students applied for it.

Our situation is very different. As I have already mentioned the initiation cost for any course is high and the run-up period is long. Thus capital must be invested long before any students appear or pay fees. If we may not subvent a course from our government grant then we could use grant money as risk capital only at our peril — gambling on attracting enough student fee income to pay it back. In consequence, we have been constrained to operate only in those areas in which we have found it possible to attract outside money — funds that are not part of our government grant.

So far these areas have included in-service teacher training, health care, and community interest courses. We have recently expanded into technology

courses (the microprocessor) and are about to start courses in business studies.

Nevertheless, in 1979, within the first decade, we had some 20,000 students in this programme, about 14,000 of whom were on short courses lasting only 8 weeks and these were mostly general interest and non-degree level courses such as the "Parenthood" courses, "Energy in the Home", "Consumer Choices", etc. The remainder took mainly degree level courses often originated in the undergraduate programme but offered as single courses to non-graduating, or as we call them, associate students.

Interest is growing, however, and I confidently anticipate that the next decade will be characterised by a rapid expansion of this programme.

RURAL EDUCATION: A NEW RESEARCH CENTRE LOOKS AT SOME PERENNIAL PROBLEMS

F. DARNELL

Introduction

During a period of constricting financial resources for research in education, declining school enrolment and guarded responses by political bodies when new schemes for education are proposed may hardly seem to be an opportune time to launch a new education research centre. But the need for research on education in rural Australia may justify an exception.

Problems of education associated with isolation, cultural heterogeneity and underdevelopment, insufficient resources, technological inadequacies and economic deficiencies in some rural areas of the country, suggest a compelling need to initiate new research efforts on rural education. Numerous factors that bear on rural education, such as geographic vastness, low population density, extraordinary costs of delivery of educational services, inadequate political influence and uncertain education goals create problems of the most vexing kind for education practitioners and consumers alike, regardless of the specific rural area of Australia under consideration. The *National Centre for Research on Rural Education (NCRRE)*, located on the campus of the University of Western Australia, was established in November, 1980 to undertake research on these and related problems.

Australians, in the main, comprise an urban society. Of the more than 14 million people who live in Australia, approximately eighty-five per cent dwell in cities. In 1978 the school-age population numbered 3.01 million. Of this number only 451,000 were to be found in what might be considered a rural setting, and among these extent and type of ruralness varied considerably. Although the number of students in rural schools is small compared with the number of students in Australia as a whole, a substantial amount of interest, support and debate revolves around the subject of rural education. This is probably due in part to a national pride in the outback and the romanticism associated with an admired independent life style. It also stems from the intensity of natural resource development now taking place in many rural regions of Australia and the practical problems this development gives rise to. There is, therefore, a disproportionately large amount of interest in the non-urban regions of Australia shown by urban dwellers.

In addition to a strong feeling of pride about outback life styles, rural education has received a boost in status in recent years because of widespread acceptance of the concept of equality of educational opportunity. Application of this concept in rural areas, however, requires extraordinary means. To assure that residents in remote and isolated areas have the same opportunity to learn as their urban counterparts, education schemes and resources yet to be identified will be required. The principle that underlies the character of the new Centre, therefore, is derived from the concept that what we learn and the level of educational achievement to which we aspire should not be limited by the circumstances of birth or the geography of where we live.

This principle implies that rural educational services are apt to be more demanding on resources and they may be quite different in content and form from education services provided in cities. As pointed out by Paul Nachtigal (1980: 38), "Rural education might just look and operate differently . . . Rural children can receive a quality education designed specifically for their needs rather than a second rate program defined by urban standards . . ." It is axiomatic to the Centre's character, to paraphrase Wise (1972: 156), that to offer students of different circumstances similar programmes of education may actually be treating them unequally. But do lofty principles justify a new national research centre when times for such activities are lean? This remains to be seen, but if the potential of the centre lies in its ability to improve education among residents of rural Australia through a better understanding of the many factors that affect education opportunities of rural residents it appears to many to be worth the effort.

National Conference on Rural Education

Suggesting that deficiencies in rural education exist is not to deny some impressive programmes in rural education that have already been achieved throughout the nation. Each state and the Northern Territory can point to past and present efforts that have achieved desirable results. But regardless of the positive things being done and favourable attitudes towards supporting efforts to solve rural problems, serious misgivings about standards in rural education are expressed at fairly regular intervals by a variety of interest groups. During a major national conference on rural education held in Perth in November, 1979, the extent to which these misgivings are based on actual conditions was frequently expressed. But in many cases protagonists for points of view on both sides of the various debates held during the conference had to concede that their views were more problematic than factual, simply because there is a dearth of reliable information on rural education. And, furthermore, that in some cases, the information that does exist is contradictory.

The conference, *New Directions in Rural Education,* gave rise to several conclusions that give credence to the idea of establishing a new research centre on rural education. The conference summary, published by the Education Department of Western Australia, reported the following:

> "There were frequent calls during the Conference for further research. It was made clear that key decisions in the rural educational arena will be made on the basis of a fragmented understanding of issues until such times as substantial studies of the problem areas are undertaken.
>
> The Conference also endorsed the importance of evaluating existing rural education projects . . .
>
> At present in Australia there seems to be no agency or authority which operates with a sufficiently broad charter that would enable it to draw together the understandings derived from a multiplicity of disciplines, such as demography, economics, government and sociology. It seems that important trends emerging from these disciplines are only incidentally monitored and taken into account when formulating education policy. Yet

the Conference convincingly underlined the shortcomings of considering educational issues without reference to developments in other disciplines. Steps should be taken to diminish such myopic planning, though the difficulties of integrating such knowledge bases should not be underestimated . . .

At present there is a limited data base for the development of rural education policies. The research that has been undertaken in the area has been diffuse in its focus and restricted in its scope . . . If research into the issues and problems surrounding rural schools is to have effect, then increasing support and coordination will be necessary . . ." (Education Department of Western Australia, 1980: 53-56, 62)

Among conferences on education in general, the Perth conference on rural education stands out. Several activities and policy considerations that grew out of the discussions and conclusions of the participants have been initiated or are being considered by various state governments. The *National Centre for Research on Rural Education* is one such development. The written proposal to the University of Western Australia and the Education Department of Western Australia which led to the creation of the Centre was inspired by the need to respond to shortcomings in rural education research identified during the conference, and the need to make more favourable and comprehensive the opportunities for education among residents of rural Australia.

The NCRRE Proposal

The Centre has been established with the broad view that *rural* is a comprehensive non-specific term. Rural in this sense requires that work carried out at the Centre be among residents of country towns, farming and pastoral settlements, mining enterprises and Aboriginal communities. In its most comprehensive sense *rural* implies that the work carried out by Centre personnel can involve any aspect of education or related fields that may have effect on education in non-urban Australia, among any classification of rural residents regardless of their background and age. Likewise, the scope of the work done at the Centre should be broad and expansive. Categories of work may range from the specific and local in nature to policy analysis at the State or Commonwealth levels leading to changes in the course of education as a whole. Work may be based on expressed need that has immediate practical application or it may be pure research not necessarily bearing upon an observed problem.

Pedagogical, economic, social, geographic, and demographic factors insofar as they bear on education in rural Australia, are the objects of the Centre's interests. Research carried out under such a broad charter might involve several categories of work. Centre research themes, therefore, might include:

Examination and analysis of the consequences for education of demographic, social and economic conditions and trends in rural Australia.

Development of policies and practices which capitalise on the perceived strengths of rural schools.

Determination of the means whereby a closer relationship between school and community may be developed.

Development of basic instructional strategies and curriculum materials identified as being appropriate to the rural Australian environment.

Examination and analysis of policies and practices associated with the professional preparation and placement of teachers in rural schools.

A review and analysis of policies and practices that regulate the organisation, governance and financing of education for rural regions of the various states and territories.

Acquisition of a better understanding of the nature, potential for education and likely consequences of modern technology, especially satellite communication technology, on the delivery of education services in rural areas.

Any number of specific research topics may be identified from such an extensive list of themes. Work at the Centre presently is involved in delineating specific research topics from these themes and assigning priorities to their eventual execution. Specific topics range, for example, from studies that will examine the provisions for educational services in mining settlements to exploration of problems associated with the design of special education programmes for physically and emotionally handicapped children in rural areas; from studies on educational problems of students in extreme isolation to acquisition of a better understanding of the nature and potential of satellite communications technology on the delivery of educational services in isolated areas.

In addition to doing research on major issues and problems in rural education which are identified as being of priority, the work of the Centre is expected to include several other activities that may lead to improved rural education. These include:

Sponsorship of national, regional and local seminars, symposia and conferences on rural education.

Development of a base from which a community of scholars, practitioners and lay people concerned for improved education in rural areas — a cadre of like-minded people — may cooperate, exchange ideas and generally associate with each other in furtherance of a common goal.

Operation of a clearing house for gathering, cataloguing and disseminating information on rural conditions and education in Australia.

Publication and dissemination of the results of research and other activities carried out at the Centre, or elsewhere, as widely as possible within Australia and overseas.

Support of relevant in-service activities which are necessary for people

directly involved in rural education or in the preparation of teachers for service in rural schools.

At present such a wide variety of activities and research themes is not commensurate with the resources of the Centre. The staff of the Centre consists of a director, a research fellow, one and one half research assistants, a secretary and a typist. In addition to the above staff members, other individuals may become affiliated with the Centre during the life of specific research projects carried out through special grants, commissions, or contracts. Also, appointees of other institutions and agencies who have appropriate research interests are encouraged to take up residency at the Centre for set terms as visiting scholars or as seconded staff members.

Resources of the Centre are available for research students to undertake investigations in rural education which will form part of the thesis requirements for higher degrees or form a basis for post-doctoral programmes. Two Ph.D. scholarships can be awarded this year.

Because of these limitations, the title 'National Centre' has been described by some as bordering on the audacious if not the pretentious, especially since the Centre has no federal sponsorship, was established on the initiative of people in one state only and has financial resources of no more than $153,000 annually. By comparison the national Curriculum Development Centre has a staff of thirty-five full-time personnel and eight part-timers plus the services of personnel of other organisations, bringing to eighty the total number of people working on CDC projects. And CDC's estimated budget for 1980/81 of $3.0 million has been described by its director as 'trivial' in view of the centre's functions (Connors, 1980:18).

Thus, the question must be asked, 'In what terms can *NCRRE* be defined as a national centre?' National in a title suggests broad based resources and scope as well as the possibility of a federal charter. Of these *NCRRE* has only broad scope. However, it does have *de facto,* if not *de jure,* licence to study issues that have national significance. Studies need not be carried out nationwide, that is, they need not be undertaken in all quarters of the nation simultaneously to have national significance. And, Western Australia as a base of operations affords a rich, near limitless combination of rural conditions under which studies may be undertaken. Also lending credence to the 'nationalness' of the Centre is the Centre's Board of Management. Although the Centre itself is small, it derives authority from a Board of Management with members drawn from a broad cross section of national interests and locales. The current Chairman of the Board is Dr. David Mossenson, Director General of Education in Western Australia (note 1).

Although the Board of Management gives the Centre policy direction, Centre personnel are staff members of the Department of Education of the University of Western Australia and the director reports to the Head of Department. Because the Centre is under the aegis of a Board of Management with nationwide representation while simultaneously functioning as a typical university research unit, it has a dichotomous constitutional structure. This

provision is seen as a means by which the Centre will be able to develop a positive relationship across a wide cross-section of the Australian population. The Board is seen as giving the Centre national credibility; the University's Department of Education as giving it academic credibility.

The Future for NCRRE

It is too early in the life of the Centre to forecast how the Centre's character will eventually take form. And the need for the Centre to come into existence notwithstanding, it comes upon the scene at an austere time in the history of education research and development. Furthermore, its initial lease on life is only three years. However, it must be taken as a positive development that the Centre exists at all. Certainly the Centre has been enthusiastically endorsed from many quarters, and enjoys a high level of professional, institutional and political support. This is an asset. But it is a qualified asset, for it has also engendered high levels of expectation. The potential of the Centre and what may be expected of it in the way of immediate results should be tempered with the reality of its limitations as well as its assets. Favourably regarded or not, it must be kept in mind that unless groups trying to bring about improvements in education have the technical resources and sufficient competent personnel for carrying out their purposes, those purposes cannot be achieved, irrespective of their logic, legitimacy or intensity.

Rural education may or may not be a more difficult subject to do research on than education in general. But only through research done thoroughly on rural education will the reality of rural problems be revealed.

It is important that education received by rural residents corresponds to their interests, norms and values. But those responsible for providing education in rural areas have first to discover what these interests, norms and values are. This will require resources, perseverance and patience. If the Centre is to achieve national status it will have to come up with findings that merit national consideration. Such developments cannot be legislated; they must be inspired. As *NCRRE* makes its first probes into the field, it is hoped that rural education will become an arena for many more inspired education researchers and that innovative educational programmes required by rural residents will be introduced.

Notes

1. Other members of the NCRRE Board of Management are: M.J. Angus, Assistant Director (Research), Education Department of Western Australia; I. Birch, Head, Department of Education, University of Western Australia; S. Broad, National Vice-President, Isolated Children's Parents Association; S.S. Dunn, Chairman, Education Research and Development Committee, Canberra; D. Fischer, Chairman of Commissioners, Rural and Industries Bank of Western Australia; W. Hamilton, Deputy Director of Education, Queensland; J. Kelly, Division of Education and Research, the Ford Foundation, New York; J. Nestor, Chairman, Catholic Education Commission of Western Australia; W. Stern, Professor of Agronomy, University of Western Australia; P. Tannock, Chairman, Schools Commission, Canberra.

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ISOLATED CHILDREN'S PARENTS' ASSOCIATION

R.H. TREWEEKE

It is unfortunate, but true, that access to equal educational opportunity for children of geographically isolated families is still dependent upon a family's capacity to pay the cost of gaining that access. For some it starts at primary school level, others at year seven and others at year eleven, but it is a fact in rural life. Representing a parent body that was formed just ten years ago with the specific aims of reducing inequalities of access, I feel it is necessary to put a parent's point of view.

First let me define some terms that are very relevant in the educational context:

Rural in its broadest sense refers to all non-urban facilities and encompasses schools that may only be 30 km from a capital city G.P.O., to the most isolated one teacher school in Australia.

Isolated, whether used in referring to a school or an individual involves a degree of relativity most usually associated with local geographic peculiarities — distance is a major element, but not the sole criterion.

Isolated within Rural, again applies to both schools and individuals — isolated schools are a phenomenon, not only of the outback but also the mountain country of eastern and south-eastern Australia and Tasmania: isolated families reside within what are normally regarded as closely settled rural communities.

A thumbnail historical sketch of rural education would comprise the following: pre-World War I, many one and two teacher primary schools for those who could walk or ride to them daily; a private tutor for some who could not — for the remainder, nothing. Post-World War I Primary Correspondence Schools were available to cater for those too far out for daily access. Except for a few major country centres access to secondary education inevitably involved living away from home. The revolution that occurred post-World War II was the introduction of bus runs that brought about consolidation of many small schools into larger units and thereby making viable the establishment of secondary facilities within daily reach of far more students. In addition the availability of unskilled jobs in rural areas prior to World War II kept low demand for secondary facilities.

The fall in Primary Correspondence enrolments has been dramatic — from 13,749 in 1961[1] to approximately 300 or less in 1980[2]. Interestingly, one and two teacher primary schools still constitute 25% of all Government primary schools, catering for 13% of primary students[3].

Throughout all these periods those students who had to live away from home to attend secondary school have used three alternatives — private board, hostels and now, government boarding schools. The current proportions of

usage for each of these are: boarding schools 65%; hostels 21%; private board 14%.

This necessity to board children away from home has been described as a *characteristic* of living in isolation, and part of that 'characteristic' is the extra cost involved[4]. It is interesting that Fagg found parental attitudes to be one of general acceptance of these 'characteristic extra costs', rather than regarding them as a disadvantage inherent in remote area residency. The experience of the Isolated Children's Parents' Association (I.C.P.A.) has been that while acceptance may have existed in the past, particularly by those who could afford it, this is no longer the case. The Hon. Wal Fife, M.P. (Federal Minister for Education) said in the course of his opening address to our Federal Conference in Adelaide last year: "Universal education is accepted in the community as the basic right of all Australians. Indeed it is taken for granted."[5] In proposing a vote of thanks to Mr. Fife, I considered it necessary to state the following:

> "The reason that this Association came into being, the reason it has continued and grown from strength to strength, is the fact that to obtain that basic right has become more and more expensive — so expensive that people on properties as well as wage and salary earners who work in the development of the inland and remote areas of Australia are forced to leave. They cannot stay if they have not access to these educational facilities."[6]

Dr Mike Young of the C.S.I.R.O. has detailed some of these movements in population related to ten shires in south-west Queensland and north-west New South Wales[7]. Between 1966 and 1976 the population of these shires fell by 7,656 or 16%, or an average of two people per day from both properties and towns. Between 1962 and 1975 the number of people employed on properties in the same area fell by 65%. They have not returned. To a greater or lesser extent this effect has been felt throughout the pastoral and agricultural areas of Australia. What is of great significance, but no surprise to I.C.P.A., is that the primary reason given by the people moving out was that families who had children in their teens chose to leave for a better education. In addition to this was the fact that graziers who had children faced a greater financial strain than others. This also is no surprise as educational expenses can amount to more than 20% of the total outlay by a grazier in any one financial year. This example highlights the obvious — a stable population is dependent on the prosperity of the local industries. Rural areas rely on farming, grazing and in some cases mining — all at the mercy of world commodity prices and the first two subject to the vagaries of the seasons.

People who live in isolated areas to win a living from the top of or beneath the soil cannot afford to do it just for the love of it, any more than a business in a town or city. Certainly they see value in a different life style but that is of little consolation if you are financially 'broke'. The difficulty is to discuss education for isolated children in a context divorced from economic reality and ultimate job availability.

I.C.P.A. came into existence as a federal body in October 1971, merely six

months after the first branch was formed at Bourke. It is unique as an inter-systemic parent group. Two premises have been basic to the Association's approach since its formation:

> Primary school-age children should remain in the home environment by either attending a local primary school (where available) or taking correspondence at home.
>
> Realising the economic and physical unreality of attempting to provide full secondary facilities within reasonable daily access of all students we accept that generally children will have to live away from home to attend an appropriate school. The 'characteristic' of living away from home is accepted, *not* necessarily the associated costs.

Because of the geography of Australia and its pattern of economic development, leading to the demographic changes outlined earlier, one fact has been increasingly clear — whether we are property owners, employees on properties, businessmen in small country towns or employees in these towns, the chances are that a majority of our children will have to move to the cities or major provincial centres to find their lifelong vocations. Except for the few mining developments there are just not enough jobs to go around in the bush. Certainly this is a predominantly economic and social matter, not something that education alone can cure, but those who are aware of its effects attempt to counter it by an educational solution — directing their children to higher educational qualifications, and hopefully more varied job opportunities.

It was suggested to me by the Conference organizers that I discuss:

(a) the extended use of current courses

(b) the future possibilities of television via satellite, and

(c) tertiary education for those who either cannot or are unable to leave home.

This latter topic is not one that I feel particularly competent to discuss. The problem of financing tertiary students in a family where other children are boarding at secondary level is very real for many isolated families. Instances have been brought to our attention where a choice has had to be made — who gets the education: the secondary student(s) or the tertiary? An unenviable task for a family which highlights further the cost of gaining access to education facilities. Our position is that the educational costs of a family unit (primary, secondary and tertiary) need to be looked at as a whole. It is a gross inequity that families are forced to choose among their own children. The provision of tertiary education in the home has yet to become a topic at our Conferences — no doubt because it is assumed by most that attendance at an institution is necessary and non-awareness that even now such courses are becoming more readily available from universities and C.A.E.'s.

I intend to take the first two topics, mix them, use full poetic licence in

defining 'course' and 'television' and relate them to the basic premises outlined above.

The word *satellite* was first introduced to our Federal Conference in 1972 and there was some argument as to how it should be spelt! But through an interest in *Schools of the Air*, certainly the greatest adjunct yet devised to assist correspondence education, we soon saw the potential that this new communications system offered. When other technologies such as home computers plus data terminals, facsimilie, slow-scan television, electronic blackboards, Teletex/Telidon information retrieval systems, etc. become available, due to the silicon chip revolution, it is obvious that a new Pandora's Box is about to open.

The following implications would appear to demand attention:

(a) Distance education is open to a complete revolution.

(b) Increased energy costs for transport, added to the costs involved in boarding children away from home when measured against the cost of this technology, will raise fundamental questions of choice.

(c) Will the established education systems, as we now know them, accept the challenges presented by this technology, or will commercial enterprises set the pace?

To deal with the last first — only the systems administrators can answer this, but a glance at the advertising in the daily press and weekly magazines shows quite clearly that the commercial enterprises are up and running.

The crunch for isolated families comes from (b). Within the foreseeable future it is quite probable that for the equivalent cost of boarding, tutoring and transporting two children for one year, a family could be set up in their own home with all the equipment necessary to educate their children from kindergarten to Year 12. The question is: will this be educationally and socially beneficial or destructive? In general isolated families have had little or no exposure to the modern mass media — most have no television, many no telephones let alone home computers. But there is the realisation of the limited job opportunities for young people in isolated and rural communities, that they will have to compete with their urban counterparts in the jobs market; that they will have to learn to cope and adjust to different life styles and values.

It is my submission that this acclimatisation is better received and undertaken at secondary level — not suddenly thrust upon a young adult who has little knowledge of how the other half lives, apart from what one may have seen on a video screen. Passive non-participatory viewing is a far cry from active involvement. Further, for those who in the future do make their livelihood in isolation an appreciation of the trials and tribulations of urban life — as well as its benefits — will give them a better understanding of the community as a whole.

Because of the difficulties for both student and supervisor in attempting full secondary correspondence education, accompanied as it is by social, cultural and sporting deprivation, I cannot see it becoming the norm, even with the advent of the new technology. Few people are blessed with the special degrees of motivation and dedication that are required.

When we are seeking applications of the new technologies that can be delivered by satellites we can identify advances in the Primary Correspondence field — in particular making *School of the Air* available to all correspondence students, not just those within range of a Royal Flying Doctor Service Base — in broadening curricula choices available in isolated rural schools, and in the fields of technical, adult and further education. In this regard we may be accused of being bound too slavishly to the existing known systems but it is better to work for clearly perceived goals, limited though they may be initially, than to run the risk of throwing the baby out with the bath water.

One temptation for educational administrators that clearly arises in relation to the educational uses of these new technologies, is to centralise resources — a temptation that must be resisted. Devolution of responsibility to more localised areas has been taking place within our monolithic education structures and, although growing pains are apparent, should be encouraged. Prime reasons are to make curricula more relevant and more receptive to local input and, above all, to make the system more flexible.

The reason I have mentioned curricula in isolated rural schools, is that they have come in for some trenchant criticism[1]. What Turney discovered in western New South Wales I have no doubt could be found in other states. It is true that probably most of the children I.C.P.A. represents do not attend isolated secondary schools because no boarding facilities exist. But there are exceptions, particularly where hostels are operated or private board is arranged so that children do not have to go all the way to a city for their education. The great problem rural schools are faced with, is to educate two distinct streams — those who wish to stay in the local environment, generally in an unskilled or semi-skilled occupation and, therefore, do not have great academic aspirations; and, secondly, those who do wish to proceed ultimately to tertiary or technical levels. With smaller numbers of students and consequently more meagre resources, particularly in terms of staff to provide variety of subjects, these schools are faced with an almost insurmountable problem. The new transition education programmes that are commencing will hopefully be one step towards resolving this dilemma. Introduction of the new communication technologies may well provide additional solutions.

Unhappily for educational administrators there is no one universal set of factors that applies throughout the continent, or even one state, when it comes to planning for the isolated in education. Administrators are well aware that the additional costs in providing services may be as great as four times the urban average, including the provision of secondary correspondence, which does not constitute a cheap alternative. Those of us living in these areas know only too well the costs of gaining access where local facilities are not able to be

provided. The new technologies will offer means to vary the content input, and possibly to do so economically.

Australia is often compared to Canada in terms of a scattered population, thinly inhabiting the hinterland. The difference is that the Canadians huddle together for warmth in communities; we in Australia are scattered into isolated homesteads in the search for water. We just cannot escape the fact that delivery will continue to be expensive and the key will remain in providing choice without financially penalising the consumer for exercising his/her right. Assistance for those who have to, or choose to live away from home, will need to continue and to be improved; the demand for hostels and boarding schools will continue. If choice without financial penalty is not provided then the 'basic right' referred to by Mr Fife is a myth.

So far as we, as parents, are concerned in I.C.P.A. there is a responsibility to continually evaluate our basic assumptions with regard to the delivery of education, in the light of new circumstances as they arise and taking note of the impact and effect of the new technologies as they are implemented.

The residents of our isolated regions are a resilient people, and adaptable within a certain innate conservatism: change for change sake does not impress. In the field of education, which is the only certain commodity we can hand our children for their future, that adaptability will be tested to the utmost.

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EDUCATION AND ISOLATION: THE COLONIAL DIMENSION

R. NETTLEFORD

Introduction

Having come here, I just want to let you know that I have learned a great deal, and it is on the basis of that learning, even if as a little instant coffee — quick, that is — that I am going to make my comments. Hopefully it will be based on the experience I have had in the Caribbean which, by definition, has had to deal with distant learning.

We are distant learners because the idea of our own location being distant from where the action is supposed to be, (namely the metropole) is something that has been deeply imbedded in our psychology. In fact, much of the dynamics of Caribbean existence is really to defy a struggle with that very sense of isolation, or that sense of distance. It has to do partly with the geography. But some of you who have followed West Indian politics over the most recent past will have gathered from the western press (largely the North Atlantic press) that we have been engaged in a particular kind of flirtation with one Castro of Cuba. Now, Cuba is 90 miles away but in truth and in fact we are much closer to London, 4,000 miles away, then we ever have been to Havana, 90 miles away. So when people talk about distance in geographical terms, I sometimes find it extremely difficult to comprehend, because the lands juxtaposed to each other have long had to fight the tyranny of geographical distance. So what may appear to be an anti-colonial stance in just about everything that I do or say, is nicely balanced for those of you who may be a little uncomfortable with the language — nicely balanced by the paradoxical realities of one's own experience in the whole dialectical existence of man.

If one can speak of a Pauline conversion, in the sense of 'scales falling off one's eyes' and one experiencing something which is worldly and elemental, well one has had one or two of those conversions in one's life. And one such occasion, oddly enough, was my sojourn at Oxford. So, you see there are all sorts of paradoxes. Part of the whole matter of creative living is to sort much of this out without ending up with some kind of psychological or mental disintegration. This creates for people like myself, and I would say for many and most certainly for educators in the Caribbean who have been at the centre of the whole development of that region over the past century, a tremendous gift of coping with life, of understanding society, and of indulging that strange phenomenon which I will recommend to Australians who are fearful about the future, *viz.* hope in despair. This is something from which one just cannot escape; and so it is against this background that I have been thinking about the concept of isolation.

Colonisation and Isolation

The concept of isolation brings immediately to mind considerations of geography. Distance teaching or communication other than by

student/teacher contact as a tutorial obligation, also comes to mind, and with it such programmatic commitments as correspondence courses, radio seminars, with organized feedback mechanism, television courses and now the satellite. Characteristically, the emphasis is often less on *what* is taught, than *to what end* and *to whom* and *by whom* it gets taught. Rather, much effort is put into the effectiveness of educational technology in responding maybe to political pressure, or in achieving someone's civilised mission on earth if not guaranteeing a lucrative market for the latest line in a piece of hard or soft ware. In fairness, the technology or technologies are just as frequently viewed as the much desired mechanisms they are to the prospective consumers, since they are designed to conquer the tyranny of geographical distance and to narrow spatial chasms that separate man from man and imprison him within the narrow confines of isolated modes of existence which, I believe, if allowed the benefit of cross-fertilization, one with another (and here one calls on education to do this), would certainly grow and develop into a generally enriched and textured source of energy for creative living.

But even when such a process of cross-fertilization is conspicuously, consciously or accidentally set in train, as it was in the settlement of Australia and in the exploitation of sugar in the Caribbean, there can be no guarantee that isolation will not persist. Contact between cultures and between civilizations may indeed break down one kind of isolation and replace it with another. To be educated or acculturated out of one's primal existence has provided both the dominant culture and the acculturated with the burden of guilt or the thirst for revenge in the history of modern man. And certainly this is the stock of much of Caribbean history over the past 500 years. Set within the framework of European expansion and colonial rule, the history of such peoples has attested not only to the conquests of geographical distance, but also to the enduring patterns of psycho-cultural isolation, and dislocation of both the colonizer and the colonized. This isolation, or the sense of it, has often been described in terms of the power relations between one set of people living in a dominant culture structure on the one hand and a ruling or governing class on the other hand in that structure.

By power, one means the capacity of someone to make definitions about one's own existence, and to be able to follow through with the determination of action, based on such definitions and in one's own interest. The incapacity to do this may be both cause and consequence of the sense of isolation, that sense of being outside the mainstream of a society's being, whether that society is world society, territorial society, federal society, municipal or local rural society. Anything that promotes this incapacity becomes an instrument of impoverishment (some would say oppression) of the will of the incapacitated. Education is often regarded as quite an antidote — in other words, as an instrument of enrichment and of actualization of the will of the human being acting individually or in concert to determine the mainstream of the life of the social aggregate of which he is deemed to be an integral part. Thus, he is saved from the vile and divers consequences of isolation or, as some would say in this context, alienation. All this is, of course, predicated on the existence of a level of consciousness on the part of the alienated, not only of the objective reality and active force of a mainstream, but of the fact that the isolated is being

prevented from determining the course and direction of that mainstream.

Cultural Majorities and Minorities

One thing that colonization does rather effectively, or has to do to be effective, is to establish beyond anyone's doubt (and certainly beyond the doubt of the colonized) that the main-stream belongs to the colonizer. Against this background the task of education may be seen as self-evident. For what is education if it is not to promote, facilitate and reinforce the capability for self-definition within the context of social interaction and for the implementation of plans that can give active meaning to such definition? Failure of education to do this lies in education allowing itself to become an agent of the alienation or self-negating process, or a function of the stubborn persistence of minorities among social aggregates.

Now, the definition of the term "minorities" itself presents problems, for the term in its primal power-sense cannot be defined primarily, if at all, in respect of numbers. In the real world, numerical majorities sometimes function as minorities, especially in political structures. And this, despite the mystical claims made by sundry regimes to gifts of populist grace or to that kind of popular legitimacy which is based on electoral unction or revolutionary acclamation. For here, numerical minorities rule the roosts for long or short periods of time. And depending on ideological predilections or accidents of history, some majorities may come to regard their isolation, or alienation, from the political decision-taking process, either as a temporary, voluntary and partial surrender of will and freedom in exchange for individual and collective security, or as a fate of indefinite tenure, underpinned by a conspicuous lack of control of, or access to the ultimate source of coercive power.

Parliaments, the Press, Public Opinion, Parties, Elections (all with capital letters) are institutional devices in western political systems reflecting the very important notion of ultimate *majority* control of political power. But such majorities may be as much distinguished by their lack of control of the ultimate source of economic power — what one tradition of social and economic analysis regards as the absence of ownership and control of the means of production, and what Third World majorities perceive as the persistence of an "imperialist capitalist" system skilfully manipulated by the powerful technologically advanced minority concentrated in the North, and pitted against the helpless ex-colonial and technologically weak majority in the South.

Let me tarry for a while, because this is very important to people like ourselves and most certainly to Australians. There are, of course, limitations on the numbers game for obvious reasons. I have indicated it in the face of the reality of political power. But there is another component which has to be taken into consideration, particularly in the situation where there are colonizers and colonized, and that is the fact of what I refer to as *ancestral pedigree*. That is the qualitative force and power in the relationship between colonizer and colonized which sometimes gives to minorities an influence considerably disproportionate to their actual numbers. This is certainly the

case in a place like the United States of America where 25% of the population, who are Black, seem to have influence, power and say out of proportion to their actual numbers. But that is based on some notion of ancestral pedigree since the Blacks were supposed to have been among the first who went and helped build that society, not to speak, of course, of the American Indians against whom all other groups in the United States of America seem to be fighting, having usurped their land.

Cultural Control

For educators, another variable in the question of isolation is of particular importance on the global level, and that is the lack of control (if not of ownership) of the cultural sources of energy on the part of vast aggregates of human beings who are prevented by a psychology of dependence from being creative contributors to the design of their own life of living, a factor of social engagement deemed crucial to the growth and development of any civilization worth its salt. The communications media on which education depends so heavily, are as much an obstacle to this development of self-determination as they can be a help.

Numerical majorities can, as a result, be forced to function as cultural minorities, as much as numerical minorities can control and determine the dominant ethos of an entire society. The ancestrally legitimate can be relegated to cultural bastardy, if they lack political or economic power. I do not have to tell descendants of the Scots, the Welsh, the Irish here gathered about this. In fact, efforts have been made and are still being made to give political institutional justification to the claim for ancestral legitimacy — in Scotland, with its own Parliament; in Wales, which has its Prince, if nothing else; and the Irish are still at it. Neither the failure to harmonize the sensibilities of a dominant ethos with the social cultural realities of the majority of the populace from which that dominant ethos demands unquestionable fealty and official allegiance, nor the absence of any serious dynamic interaction between two or more competing expressions of cultural and social reality in a given society, is the least of the educators' problems in a world that is full of *neighbours* living in *isolated* pluralism, or *isolates* indulging the ritual rhetoric of *melting-pot* conviviality.

Multi-cultural Australia should avoid this latter brand of indulgence at all costs. New nations from the 200-year old United States of America to the recently liberated islands of the class-ridden multi-racial Caribbean, wallow in the myth, and confuse us educators who are caught off guard often enough to be appropriated as allies in perpetuating the myth. Australia now glories in multi-culturalism with its taste of Asian, Mediterranean and Aboriginal 'minorities'. And the temptation, I know, is very great.

The United States of America is a very interesting case. Melting-pot indeed! And if we want to look at the metaphor literally, let us do so. It is a pot and everybody is in it. But I have always found it a very prophylactic exercise since everybody, black, white, Irish-American and all the other hyphenated Americans, all seem to be safely wrapped in some kind of impervious plastic sheaths — encapsulated in their own area and all boiling in the pot, yes, and

even touching once the boil is on, but each keeping their separate existence. And in such a situation, as the scholars of cultural pluralism point out, the only thing that really keeps a society like that together, is the phenomenon of power in the hands of an actual political group who, in fact, acts as an honest broker but who also comes in at different periods of time as something of a bully.

I am interested to examine a particular sentiment among States-righters in Australia who honestly believe that at the present time, what the Australian constitution says in terms of girdling Canberra with restraints will, in fact, be reflected in reality in the foreseeable or non-foreseeable future. Multi-culturalism is going to be one of the elements that will give Canberra more reason to be powerful and to exercise central power as indeed Australia's own growing importance as an Asian nation and its own importance in the world at large will also push Canberra in that direction as similar factors pushed Washington D.C. earlier in this century. This state of affairs requires of the minorities as much self-negation as it promises self-actualization and often offers a strange choice between voluntary and imposed assimilation. Negative consequences of alienation, schizophrenia, of psychic withdrawal manifest themselves as major challenges to the educational system, and it will not be restricted to Aboriginal/White contact. It applies to White/White contact too.

Yet there are positive aspects about this kind of interaction. They have to be seen as dynamic responses, such as we have discovered in the Caribbean. They come out in cunning tactics of survival, and we often cannot find the words to describe them. In fact, you will find that in trying to come to grips with the essentiality of a society, one has to use two English words at the same time, and sometimes these words are in opposition for we get such tactics of survival as assimilation/rejection, attraction/repulsion, surrender/resistance, and the like. The syndrome of multivalence, not ambivalence, is one clear sign of the resistance staged by the subordinate "minorities" who are threatened with a choice between cultural isolation outside the system and cultural isolation within. For total revolutionary breaks from what has been or what is, are never as ready or practical an option as the well-intentioned radical visionary would so quickly assume. And in this sense there is much to be said for our inheritance from the British and the way the British go about their business. This offers a clear challenge for distance teaching in both formal and informal education, that is if it is designed to offer the recipient a capability in purposeful and supposedly creative living. That is what learning to be, that catch-phrase which we all used not so long ago, presumably means for contemporary man, whether he is in that state of solitude and social neglect suffered by those in urban ghettos or over-populated hillsides, or whether he is in geographical seclusion away from centres deemed to be in the main-stream of civilisation.

Institutionalised Marginality

Both types of isolation, like the history of colonialism which has bred them in places like the Caribbean, suggest a form of institutionalised marginality. Education's responsibility is no less urgent with regard to those marginalised on the basis of psycho-cultural illegitimacy, political impotence and economic

deprivation than it is in respect of an isolated rural population relegated to the back waters of an administrative system which fails to offer an adequate and just supply of social services (including, of course, educational facilities). The inhabitants of an Alice Springs, of a cattle station or an Aboriginal settlement a thousand miles from the self-appointed arrogance of the nearest metropolis that claims its civilized status on the basis of unabashed imitations of an imported lifestyle, may suffer less in important particulars than the inhabitants of a poverty stricken, under-fed and under-housed malnourished city ghetto, within a stone's throw of a cluster of stately homes where an exclusive upper class lives in ostentatious extravagance, or that same group lurking in the shadow of air-conditioned or centrally heated skyscrapers, housing office inhabitants whose expense accounts could employ hundreds who are hopelessly out of work.

At the same time, one could be quite wrong about Alice Springs. For traumas about one's own isolation often feed on a fairly high level of that consciusness I have already mentioned — that consciousness of a better life elsewhere that is felt could be within one's grasp, if only those who hanker after it are allowed to attain it. That consciousness is, itself, a result of continuing contacts between people, for contrary to certain modish beliefs among some people the consequences of such contacts are felt by everyone involved; the symbiotic effect of each on the other and the result of the contact on both can logically be the basis for collaboration and mutual sharing. Sometimes we make the differences and the gulf much wider than they need be. In fact, the contact can be logically the basis for collaboration and mutual sharing, as it can be, indeed, for the alienating doubts which often accompany such relationships. For both the colonizer and the colonized are inhabiting colonies. Both the jailer and the jailed are in jail. Both the teacher and the taught are in schools. In the Americas, the migrant European was as Negrified as the exiled African was Europeanised. And White Australia must be prepared to be Aboriginalised if the Aborigine is to be Europeanised, and both will probably have to be prepared to end up being creolised into the new Australian, whatever that is going to be.

Intellectual Authority and Domination — a Paradox

In resisting this fate, which to some may be worse than death, the use of Western intellectual authority as an instrument of domination remains the subtlest and probably the most pernicious and deadly instrument of deepening the isolation of large groups of people, one from another. The paradox is that the educated colonizer may unwittingly take refuge from his own threatened isolation — that is his imprisonment in his self-made colony — in the application of a kind of intellectual bullying or in psychological tyranny by playing Prospero to his victims' Caliban, or in an artful play of intellectual one-up-manship whereby he invokes the myth of superiority rooted in his mastery of Cartesian logic and the wonders of science and technology. This last device is a ready weapon in his armoury for the bewildered colonized.

And here again, we have a paradox. The bewildered colonized is likely to be deeply impressed by the effectiveness of the scientific tradition, to the extent that he prefers a gun to a boomerang or bows and arrows, a motor car

or aeroplane to a canoe or the camel, an electric plant or a centrally controlled electric power station to a piece of flint, a radio or television set (and soon the video) to the talking drum, or to that once eloquent spiral column of smoke. He may even prefer a good prestigious cardiac to a simple stress-free ailment. And one might ask — why shouldn't he? He is, after all, in the 'mainstream' if he acquires all these things.

But even when the isolated seem satisfied in such particulars, problems of alienation, intellectual claustrophobia and deep self-doubt continue to rear their ugly heads. Hence the rebellion of evolues (depending on what colonial system you are in), the assimilado, the Oxbridge educated, or the Christian convert in the form of the mission trained boy. Hence the trek back to ancestral homelands, whether Africa and Ethiopia, in the case of American and Caribbean Blacks, or to pockets of Australian marshes and forests, as in the case of the Aborigines. This is perhaps the lesson at this point of the twentieth century for all of us educators who are eager to peddle our choicest wares, for the missionaries' sojourn in isolated colonies of perceived ignorance and the exercise of the educators' burden, without due concern for the real needs of the isolated uneducated, may end up being the targets of the wrath of Caliban, the cynicism of the fool (as is expressed in Shakespearean drama), and the cunning duplicity expressed in a Jamaican folk hero called Anancy, who learns to live by his wits rather than by his wisdom.

The assumption on the part of the educator turned colonizer that the life of the colonized and of the isolated may indeed possess an intrinsic logic, consistency and meaning, is never a bad thing, if the end of isolation, in whatever form, is the honest aim of education. Indeed, it is the responsibility of education at all levels of operation and through the forging of contact between would-be isolates, to discover the richness of the separate areas of existence of those in contact and of the results of the contact between such separate existence rather than to deny, denigrate or obliterate components which may be valid in their own right, but do not fit into some preconceived plan or system whether they be ideological, institutional or technological. The whole history of the meeting between so-called superordinate and so-called subordinate cultures has manifested this very short-coming. The self-perception of Australians who identify with the ethos which finds institutional expression in Canberra and the State legislatures, in dealing not only with Aboriginal, but with Asian cultures, is here relevant. Contact, which is supposed to bring an end to isolation, can serve to perpetuate or intensify that isolation or at least raise among those in contact, a deepened consciousness of isolation. But this is just another of the un-ending paradoxes of existence with which education, with all its all-pervasive influence in the socialisation of man, must cope. And the encounter with concrete real life situations offers the best test for, and guide to, if not immediate solution for large chunks of Australia which is part developing and part developed. Now multi-culturalism offers just this test. And the focus of this conference, indeed, is right and timely.

Decolonisation

The Anglo Caribbean, a string of rocks scattered some 1,800 or 2,000 miles between the Bahamas to the North and Trinidad and Tobago to the South,

with mainland Belize and Guyana on the northern end of South America as historical associates, qualifies as such a real life situation and continues to be a test for the educational system. The system struggles to respond in definitive ways to the contradictions of a sprawling, disparate and developing society of a mere 5,000,000 souls.

Quite apart from being geographically isolated one from another, these islands, along with their two mainland cousins comprise populations deeply segmented by cleavages of class, race, as well as rural/urban demographic distribution. Of late, ideological differences approaching fundamental proportions, have expanded and exacerbated the factors of differentiation in what are rapidly changing communities. Isolation of group from group, generation from generation, blood relations from blood relations, signify the weakening of consensus within the society, even when there is fairly widespread agreement about the marginality or isolation of the society as a whole. Such agreement, of course, manifested itself in the nationalist movement and the surge towards political independence, which came to Jamaica in 1962 and was extended to other territories later on in the sixties. I am therefore intrigued by the preoccupations of Northern Territorians. They remind me of where the Caribbean was back in the late forties and early fifties, in the sense that we had passed the tests set by Whitehall to demonstrate that we can govern ourselves, and got our certificates. And as we got our certificates, we moved on to the higher grade, or the higher parts of the examination. The gradual way of transferring or that phased transfer of power has its tremendous advantages. It offered apprenticeship for one thing. But it also has its tremendous disadvantages, because if you keep the swimmer out of the water too long he will never learn to swim; and problems of negotiating the water which he should face when he is young and vigorous, he may have to face when he is old and decrepit.

By the time independence came to us in Jamaica, the leaders who took the initiative in the thirties, were old and tired. Their entire generation, in fact, was tired. The result was that we lost a generation in the bargain. So very little happened in the early sixties! In fact, the young ones were the beneficiaries of the journey from Crown Colony Government to responsible self-government. They soon realized that little or nothing was happening and they rebelled, literally rebelled. That has stirred up the Caribbean ever since the early sixties, to look very seriously at what the trappings of power really meant. Because what they came to mean for the region was little more than acquiring one's own Governor General, one's own independent Houses of Legislature, one's flags and symbols. We went symbol hunting: one's national bird, national flower, national stadium and so on. In the final analysis one discovered that one really had very little power, that in fact the constraints girdling the decision-taking process by those who are duly elected to take charge of the areas of effective power were more than we could bear, because what has really happened (and Northern Territorians could very well learn from this) is that there were tremendous leaps of progress from slavery to a free society, from a colonial society to an independent society. All these are very important and great leaps of progress in human experience anywhere, and certainly for us. But what happened was that the entire society moved up like a vault. Think

of a pyramid. Try and think of the entire pyramid being lifted while within the pyramid very little had changed. We had to face this particular phenomenon very seriously in the late sixties.

Economic Marginality

I read the tourist brochures and the brochures of the Northern Territory, which are attempting to attract investment by invitation into this Territory, and they read very much like ones we churned out in Jamaica during the fifties and sixties. They brought a particular kind of prosperity but to the few, not to the many, and very little changed because those who were marginal to the mainstream within the society, remained marginal and the social mobility which resulted, was miniscule compared to the deprivation which persisted. So this, of course, required of us a change of focus from political marginality, or political isolation from the centre. Britain was, of course, very good at this. The political centre, in terms of trappings, in terms of who was in charge of the area of effective power, was transferred from Whitehall to the West Indies. But we soon discovered that the economic power-centre remained in the North Atlantic and all sorts of devices were used to make this so. This at least served to bring the country together.

I must say here that this sense of economic isolation is something which is common to the Third World, and my own interest in contemporary Australia was aroused by the evidence that Australia was, in fact, conscious of its Third World condition as a developing nation (and I am speaking of all Australia) and that in fact you have a very strategic and significant mineral in this country which would have to be exploited with the help of the technology of the multi-national corporations. And I know that there has been a body of opinion in Australia which said that it must control its resources from the mining, from the extraction, right to the refining of the mineral. The wealth must stay in this country. In this sense, I think you put Victoriana behind you and entered the twentieth century. That is a fairly recent occurrence but from it the Northern Territory might learn. The Territory need not go anywhere else; it can learn from what has happened in Australia over the past 20 years or so, and make sure that it learns from some of the positive things of that development and not repeat some of the mistakes that people like ourselves have made in our part of the world.

Developmental Imperatives

This economic marginality tantamount to isolation, is a marginality rooted in the scourge of underdevelopment. I know it may be difficult for Australians to understand this because Australians are rich, but Australia wasn't always rich. This is a recent occurrence, and the Northern Territory, I am told on good evidence, is not rich, at least not yet, and is in many ways underdeveloped. Now except for Trinidad with its petroleum-based economy the rest of the Caribbean region are, for the most part, in severe economic problems, none of which have been helped by escalating oil prices, the inflationary spiral and so on. One of the things that has happened is that every teacher in the educational system has to understand the dimension of the post-colonial crisis in the society. Let me hasten to say that in fairness to us as

educators, at whatever level, too much is expected of us. But then we do make certain claims for education as an all pervasive agent of socialisation and, in fact, we can't eat our cake and have it. The truth of the matter is that without the support mechanisms of a sympathetic political decision-taking process, and proper institutions and procedures our effect on students (at whatever level) will, in fact, be less than is expected.

Now, the economic situation has resolved itself into notions of a developmental model and so one talks about developmental imperatives. The implications for the educational system are, here again, self-evident. The task of preparing an entire populace for economic self-reliance, for the effective management of resources — material and human — for rationalisation of public sector management and private sector organisation, as well as the preparation of organised workers for purposeful participation in the production process, all began to challenge the entire education system to a new found reality and a new relevance. Much of this has gone on under that catch-phrase "developmental imperatives". Interestingly enough there is no development studies institute in the University of the West Indies where I teach. Perhaps just as well, for the myth of the multi-disciplinary miracle is something that we all indulge, but from which we may well be liberated. And there is just one thing worse than politics, and that is academic politics.

Developmental Commitment

Some take the view that all the major disciplines having to do with the society's existence in any case, must each have a developmental commitment or be adapted to help shape the path to development which, of course, is what a university in the Northern Territory would be all about. So the classic form of developmental concerns endow the old and sometimes quite arbitrary academic divisions with a new form and vigour. From primary through graduate and technical education to adult or continuing education, the absence of a real capability in the key areas of human existence, itself an index of under-development or isolation, prompts an entire region into action. And national educational policies have come to reflect this orientation over the past two decades in the Caribbean.

Foremost in the context of economic isolation are: (1) the need to improve productivity in agriculture, partly for the export of products that will learn much needed foreign exchange or hard currency that can in turn be ploughed into industrial and all forms of development; (2) the need to produce sufficient food for a country's consumption so as to cut down on excessive import of foreign foodstuff, which eats into foreign exchange earnings; and (3) the need to ensure that high nutrition is guaranteed a population which is healthy enough, strong enough, resourceful enough and resilient enough to produce and to absorb the fruits of education and training. All these needs are forced on the education system — new initiatives or new emphases, not only in respect of curriculum content, but in institution building, and even in the geographical location and distribution of educational services. A number of things have shown themselves, from the re-introduction of the school garden which was abandoned from the old colonial days, partly because it was colonial, and among an ex-slave population one does not get one's students

who go to get something into their heads working with their hands. A mistake! We have had to go back to that.

One also finds that the university's Faculty of Education and of Medicine have discovered extension services, something which the Extra Mural Department did for years, and happily they are now raising funds for research for graduate fellowships and so on, and going into the by-ways and hedges because it is a condition of survival. And distance teaching, distance learning, in all the ways described by Lord Perry and Roby Kidd, have come to serve that particular need, but it comes out of felt and express needs in the totality of an experience which is pertinent with the possibilities of being isolated in an economic sense.

Population and Health Education

The next area of development concern is population and health sciences. Now, the threat of too many mouths chasing too few material resources — which I gather is not quite the problem here in Australia — too many hands after too few jobs, is a challenge for education even more than for politicians. Well-financed projects designed to distribute condoms or I.U.D.'s are not usually the most effective way of getting people to understand the organic relationship between population dynamics and the state of the economy. Nor will enforced sterilization, as the Indian political directorate, under Mrs. Indira Ghandi, recently discovered.

In the Caribbean cultural factors, including religion, often resist educational programmes on population control and fertility regulation. Populations of largely African descent, but operating as powerless majorities in a minority Eurocentric power structure, feel the need to suspect that 'birth control is a plot to kill out black people', which is a popular graffiti that one will see on the walls of Kingston. Here the politics of numbers has a compelling attraction to the subconscious of a self-conscious underclass. It is something that one might bear in mind here. The Chicainos of California, I gather, have pledged to take back California from the Americans by way of a baby boom. I do not know what the Aborigines or new migrants into Australia plan. But one may find that the present Australian majority may be the future minority, numerically speaking. The belief that large families are a real economic investment against the insecurity of old age in a society still not blessed with generous State welfare systems (comprising pension provisions and unemployment benefits) is a belief that dies hard, even among sophisticated urban dwellers. And one might ask — what does education do in the circumstances?

Well, in the Caribbean we have had a plurality of approach. Health educators are now a new and vibrant breed on the scene. And Health Science teachers, vocational guidance experts introduce sex education early into the school system. It has become a frenetic activity all over the Caribbean, made necessary of late by the prevalence of teenage pregnancies in the secondary schools. In all this, the women are the main target groups, but the men come in for their fair share of education and re-orientation away from their 'macho' obligations to litter the countryside with children. And they are made targets

of projects like the one we have in the Trade Union Education Institute at the University of the West Indies, organised in collaboration with the Jamaican trade unions. It has devised a set of courses designed to get young working men to understand the correlation between their earning power (real and potential) and the size of a family. University adult education, the Department of Preventive and Social Medicine, the Department of Obstetrics and Gynaecology now act in concert on different types of research into fertility regulation, population control, family development, with funds that currently come from UNFPA and UNDP. The evaluation of much of this, of course, is underway and one cannot speak definitively on this.

Cultural Dimension of Development

Lastly, the cultural dimension of development becomes very important, and here it may be of some significance to the people here who in fact are undoubtedly in the dominant culture. And in coping with this — whether they be Aborigines, Greek, Vietnamese, Italians, whatever — one might in fact look at some other places to see what happens to so-called minority groups. The truth of the matter is that in the big underclass in the Caribbean (largely of African descent) that could be irrelevant, if the dominant culture did not make it very important, since one of the things in shaping a Caribbean ethos and a Caribbean civilisation, is that every effort has been made under colonialism to deny the presence of the African or to denigrate it. And many people coming out of colonialism feel that the African Presence at the centre of the ethos, along with the others, is crucial to national unity. Now this is something that I think the new Australia will have to cope with.

What are Australians going to place at the centre of their ethos? What is really going to determine an Australian ethos? If you keep large numbers of your people outside of that ethos by institutional means and make them marginal, that's where you are going to get most of the rebellion. Ironically, it is going to come through the education process. It is in the school system and the adult education area, wherever there is contact demanding the learning process being set in train, that you are going to get the consequences of cultural frustration. If you look at the indices of culture (and I do not mean a little bit of dance, a little bit of music or a little bit of play acting — I am referring to culture seen as the totality of the human expression through the prism of the creative intellect and the creative imagination) you will find that large segments of people — people living in certain societies — do not, or are not allowed to contribute to the central ethos.

Language

Look at language. Even in my case the language which I am speaking to you in, which approximates the standard English, is really the language of instruction — a kind of *lingua franca* among Jamaicans. We are blessed with several Creole languages in the Caribbean. Most of the people in Jamaica do not speak the way I speak most of the time. There is a Creole, there is a 'Jamaican talk' in Jamaica. In Trinidad there is a patois, and in the French Islands there is a patois. In Curacao there is papiamento which, in fact, has become scribal and literary enough now to be taught in schools there. That is the only one, along with Haitian Creole which is, in fact, regarded as an

official language. But think very seriously! Here are a group of people who have created, out of the genius of their collective experience, a language with its own syntax and its own internal structure and consistency; yet nothing deemed to be of importance in the society is expressed in that language. It is very difficult. Now, we have to be sensible and we as survivors in the Caribbean are very sensible. We are not going to abandon English. Of course not! After all it puts us in contact with millions of people all over the globe. It is now a universal and global language which we need, and we certainly are going to master it and use it in our own interest. But what do we do with *our* own language?

This has been a very serious problem, for educators, because what many of our educators have done is to relegate scores of children to positions of inferiority by telling them that they are non-verbal. In fact they are not non-verbal. They may be non-verbal in Standard English, but they are very verbal in their own language. What one finds is that when one enters school one is taught to speak 'properly', which means one is to speak the Queen's English or the King's English. Now, after some linguistic research, we have moved away from that back to where I was when I was a child; that is, we use the different languages and we compare them, and by way of comparison one teaches the child to respect his own language, but at the same time to value the use of the *lingua franca*. And this is a movement which is apace throughout the education system.

Many people here have been talking about Aboriginal languages and the need to get to the Aborigine (or any other) through his own language. It doesn't necessarily mean a threat finally to Englisn as a Standard — as a *lingua franca*. In fact, there is no need to worry: the sun will have set on the British Empire, but not on the English language. It will live, and it will live because it is a powerful form, and it is a very useful one, and people are sensible enough to know this. And talking about language, in Sydney, on my way here, I was making bookings — or rather someone was making bookings for my passage and we had some difficulties getting from Adelaide to Alice Springs. And she said — "You are white-listed". And I said — "White-listed?" And then an Australian Standard English speaker came to my rescue and said — "Wait-listed". So the linguistic index of culture is very important to bring people into the mainstream. What is needed is really a very clever and sensitive approach to what could be a problem.

Religion and Art

I could also speak about religion — another index of culture. The old Christianity has a way of coming through as the legitimate religion. Inevitably! There was a time when Western civilization was synonymous with Christendom. We sometimes forget that particular inheritance. But you in Australia have around you great faiths, the adherents of which are no longer 'Infidels'. One can, happily, explore the ecumenism of the world today and really work it into one's own system. In our Caribbean situation, what the people themselves — that large underclass — create in terms of religious expression (and we have many) are not the legitimate ones in the ethos — not the pocomania, the santeria, the shango, the Rastafarianism. None of them

are deemed legitimate beside the imperial majesty of Christianity — the values of which neatly underpin the secular ethos.

Artistic manifestations are another cultural index. These become very important to an underclass. When one is in a situation of being oppressed or being isolated on the edge of a mainstream society, one falls back on the things over which one has total control, and such things have to do with the creative intellect and the creative imagination. One invents his own God. One holds on to his own cosmology and one creates one's own dances. One creates one's own songs; one creates one's own paintings; or, if one has had them before the contact with a dominant culture, one constantly invokes the legitimacy and certitude of these ancestral elements. All these have come to be primal in the experience and development of the Caribbean region which I see, as I said before, as the source of energy of most of what the contemporary Caribbean is about.

Conclusion

After going through much of what I have said about cultural integrity and identity for people who are expected to live within a political structure, but are not given the tools or the support mechanisms to participate in that structure, there is a grave responsibility on our part — as educators — to create a society and bequeath a civilization in which future generations of Caribbean (or Australian) men and women will enjoy cultural confidence as a matter of course, and have their creative potential actualised in the crafting of cultural products of excellence that will in turn enrich, elucidate and celebrate life.

> "We will then be released from the scourge of a demeaning dependency, the clumsiness of self-indulgent revolt and the debilitating destructiveness of hate and revenge. That will be the day when all lingering sense of shame will dissolve in the unequivocal acceptance of self as it emerges from a history that is replete no less with ennobling acts of invention and triumphs than it is with degradation and defeats. That will be the day when our people will no longer feel uneasy for being indebted to Europe, Africa or whatever may contribute to our nurturing, for the gift of influence will be like fertilizers to the soil with our capacity for free choice and our own experience, hopes, fears and aspirations as the soil. That will be the day when self-contempt will vanish in the face of a growing self-confidence and when pride that is puffed up will be so replaced by a self-assured humility, that no one will find it tactically necessary to accuse great art of feudalism and excuse poor art as suffering. That will be the day when the essential unity of man will triumph over the cleavages of race class and cultural capacities. That will be the day . . ."

DISTANCE OR DIFFERENCE IN ABORIGINAL EDUCATION

BETH GRAHAM

Introduction

The majority of the 27,000 Aborigines in the Northern Territory live in remote communities, and on cattle stations, or are grouped around some of the smaller rural towns that are scattered through the 1,347,500 square kilometres of the Northern Territory. These extremely isolated communities may vary in size from, say, one hundred to over one thousand people. There is vast climatic and geographical variation, too, between the tropical communities around the beaches that fringe the Arafura Sea, and those in the desert where the harsher climate and terrain have an appeal of their own to those who live there.

To educate 7,000 Aboriginal children, the Northern Territory endeavours to maintain 43 schools in Aboriginal communities, plus another 27 which are located on pastoral properties. Apart from two residential colleges located at Alice Springs and Darwin, which cater for secondary age Aboriginal students, all Aboriginal schools could be regarded as remote, isolated by geographical distance from the larger centres. These 70 schools present complex logistical problems to those who supply and maintain buildings, equipment and staff. However, although formidable, the problems associated with remoteness are insignificant when compared with the social, cultural and linguistic factors that create distance between these traditionally-oriented Aboriginal children and our western style of education.

The Starting Point: Recognition of Difference

People who visit Aboriginal communities are often overwhelmed by the personal material poverty that seems to pervade settlement life. In addition visual evidence of buildings such as hospitals, schools, stores and workshops and of goods such as the vehicles, guitars and western clothes, together with the apparent lack of traditional artifacts may prompt visitors to assume that Aboriginal culture has wasted away and what is left is a remote settlement that is Aboriginal simply because of the inhabitants' skin colour and their claim to Aboriginal racial identity. However, those non-Aboriginal people who remain in Aboriginal communities and become receptive to Aborigines, begin to see beneath the veneer of non-Aboriginality. They become increasingly aware that Aboriginal culture is not much concerned with the care of material goods, but is vitally concerned with values, relationships and social organisation. Moreover, they come to know that Aboriginal culture as expressed in a particular Aboriginal language is very much alive and provides the rationale for the behaviour and events that occur in daily life; behaviour that often remains — for the unknowing onlooker — incomprehensible.

There are many features of this hunting-gathering heritage that careful observation can establish. Perhaps one of the most important features is a relatively strong present and past-continuous orientation to life. Stephen

Harris in his study of *Milingimbi Aboriginal Learning Contexts* (1977:138) contends that this present time orientation is still more real than a future view of life and strongly influences attitudes to knowledge, learning and the cash economy in ways that frequently create distance between the Aboriginal child and school. In educational terms this can mean that the importance of gaining what appears to be meaningless knowledge now against some future need for that knowledge, is not always appreciated. This is in contrast to our own society where long term motivation is provided by a socio-economic system that has demonstrated that a better education opens doors to higher status and greater economic reward. (Some of the tensions presently being experienced in our own society are due to the fact that this is no longer always true.) Although money circulates in Aboriginal communities, Harris (1977:62) has pointed out that the people are still more orientated to a hunting/gathering view of life than to that of a cash economy. This means that pension, child-endowment and unemployment cheques, and I would add the wages of some workers, are still 'gathered' at the office and redistributed through the community in much the same way that the results of hunting expeditions were distributed in the past. This attitude to resources can demolish incentive to learn or work and fails to provide the socio-economic climate on which educational services (as we know them) are usually dependent for success.

Although today there are schools in most Aboriginal communities, the type and purpose of the education that can be gained at such institutions is little understood by many Aboriginal people. This could be due to the fact that traditional Aboriginal society was the ultimate in de-schooled societies. This does not mean that children and adults did not learn what they needed to know for the physical and spiritual survival of the group, but that there was no teaching task that was the role of a few specially selected people. Ensuring that everyone gained the skills and knowledge they required was part of the obligation bestowed by relationship. All people were both teachers and learners, and education was not separated from ongoing everyday life.

Learning in such Aboriginal societies occurred and continues to occur largely through what we regard as the informal strategies of observation, imitation, personal trial and error, real-life performance rather than practice in contrived settings, and through mastering context-specific skills (Harris, 1977). The formal, largely verbal strategies in the teaching and learning styles of urban, middle class Australia, are not in evidence in traditionally oriented Aboriginal communities.

This non-verbal nature of Aboriginal learning contexts does not mean that Aboriginal people don't talk to each other or pass on information by verbal means. The vast store of traditional knowledge which we loosely label "oral tradition" has been passed on in this way. However, the emphasis on verbalised learning processes, particularly the range and styles of questions, which are both so much part of the techniques of school education are not familiar learning strategies in Aboriginal communities. Aboriginal children when placed in classrooms are faced with a language gap. Those teachers who are not Aboriginal use a different language. They also use verbal teaching styles and different inter-personal communication styles that create distance

between the children and education. It is really rather like throwing them into the deep end of the language 'pool' and hoping they can all swim — even with their hands tied behind their backs.

However, culture not only affects how people learn but what they learn. John Harris (1979) in his study on *Ethnoscience and its Relevance for Aboriginal Education* summarized many of the cultural factors that influence the contexts of learning:

> An Aboriginal child entering school has, in common with all children, already started to develop cognitively. The adult community has already influenced the child's cognitive development so that he has begun, albeit at a very elementary level, to comprehend himself and the world about him in terms of the world view of the community in which he is growing up. As the child matures, learning to label and order his experiences, it is inevitable that his cognitive development will be very strongly influenced by an Aboriginal system of knowledge. (p.143).

Harris goes on to say:

> This is the base upon which later cognitive development and learning will build irrespective of what is attempted by the school. If it is ignored it is doubtful whether the school will play a significant part in the cognitive development of the Aboriginal child. If the school fails to recognise the importance of the child's previous cognitive development, the cognitive structures he has acquired and the Aboriginal system of knowledge which provides the context in which his cognitive development has occurred, it is unlikely that the school will succeed in assisting the child to acquire Western concepts and skills. (p.149).

So far I have mentioned five elements of the cultural distance between Aboriginal children and schools: present time orientation; non-verbal learning styles; different rules of interpersonal communication; different first language of white teachers and their students; and a different environmental knowledge base for early cognitive development. But there are other factors that create barriers between Aboriginal children and school learning as well. They range from such things as poor school attendance to problems caused by chronic health disorders, especially ear infections. They are all compounded by the fact that non-Aboriginal teachers are usually not specially trained for their task and frequently do not stay long enough in Aboriginal communities to overcome their own ethnocentricity and so become effective teachers of Aboriginal children. All this does not deny that Aboriginal children share behavioural universals with all other children: they are intelligent, they respond to personal warmth, and they have pride in a job well done and so on. However, if we as educators are to respond to these universal characteristics we must continually remember that although in many ways Aboriginal children are like all children everywhere, in many other ways they are different. They grow up with a distinctly Aboriginal linguistic, social, cultural and cognitive orientation to life which they bring with them into the classroom and which we as educators cannot ignore.

The Development of Educational Services

During the first half of this century Missions operating in the Northern Territory displayed a concern for the school education of Aboriginal children. However, it was not until 1950 that the Commonwealth Government entered the field. During this period Australia adopted a policy of assimilation for Aboriginal people. This policy — which is still influential — aimed at ensuring that:

> all Aborigines and part-Aborigines will attain the same manner of living as other Australians and live as members of a single Australian community enjoying the same rights and privileges, accepting the same responsibilities, observing the same customs and influenced by the same beliefs, hopes and loyalties as other Australians. (The Minister for Territories, 1963, quoted in Watts and Gallagher, 1964: 33).

This policy stimulated the development of an educational program that overlooked the special aspects of the cognitive, social and emotional development of the Aboriginal child and so created barriers between the children and education. Even teachers who questioned such an approach felt helpless to break down these barriers for without a sound knowledge of the local Aboriginal language, or access to a group of Aboriginal adults who had some inkling of the goals of an institutionalised educational program, it was impossible to really know where to find starting points for what could become a meaningful educational program. Although some Aboriginality was added to the school program by the inclusion of Aboriginal dance and traditional arts, in general the program was designed to ignore not only the language and the knowledge that the children brought with them to the classroom, but also the values inherent in the Aboriginal culture itself. In line with the assimilation policy of the day, the program was designed to educate Aboriginal children away from their Aboriginal heritage and into a place in the dominant society that many of them had no desire to fill.

In 1964 Watts and Gallagher made an in-depth study of Aboriginal education and their report resulted in programs of education that, through streaming of children in the upper-primary schools and introduction of residential colleges, allowed more Aboriginal children to gain better access to Western education.

Throughout the Territory there was significant improvement in both the organisation of schools and in the development of more relevant curricula. And, most encouraging of all, Watts and Gallagher saw quite clearly that Aboriginal education required teachers with special qualities and qualifications. Inclusion of Teaching English as a Second Language and Aboriginal Studies courses were recommended as part of the training teachers who were to work in the Northern Territory should receive. (Also, although the report makes little mention of Aboriginal teachers, it was during this period that there was a gradual development of programs to train teaching assistants and the groundwork was laid for the development of an Aboriginal Teacher-Training establishment.)

In particular the Watts-Gallagher report dwelt on the linguistic, social and cultural background of Aboriginal children and stated quite forcibly that programs designed for these children must implement the recognition of difference if meaningful educational outcomes were to be achieved. However, although Watts and Gallagher acknowledged the educational and psychological advantage of using the child's first language, they felt the practical problems were too great and they did not at that time recommend such an approach. Aboriginal children continued to be schooled in a system designed for children who spoke another language and had begun to conceptualise their world in ways that were vastly different from their own, and so many barriers to effective learning remained.

It was not until 1973, with the introduction of Bilingual education, that there was any far-reaching change in the system. The report *Bilingual Education in Schools in Aboriginal Communities in the Northern Territory* prepared by Watts, McGrath and Tandy provided guidance for the introduction of the mother tongue, as well as English, as media of instruction (note 1). Such a move allowed for the increased professional involvement of Aboriginal staff, and so reduced several of the major barriers between the Aboriginal child and school education. Initially, the emphasis for those of us working in bilingual programs was on developing vernacular reading schemes. In the early years of Bilingual Education the staff in these remote communities had to not only prepare and print books, but to develop, both for the children and for the Aboriginal teachers who would teach the children, workable literacy programs.

Because of the demands of the literacy programs during those early years little work had taken place in other curriculum areas. It began to dawn on teachers that now that the language the children spoke was one of the official media of instruction of the school, the gulf that had existed between the conceptual world of the Aboriginal child and the learning experiences provided for him, could be overcome, and moving from the known to the unknown could become a reality in Aboriginal education (see J. Harris, 1979). In practical terms this means that we can now acknowledge that, for example, the effective starting point for mathematical studies for Aboriginal children is not in the number strand, but in the area of what we call space. This does not mean that we translate our terminology of space into their language (which in the early days of bilingual education sometimes occurred) but we begin with the child's perceptions of space which he talks about in his own language and build on this foundation to develop other mathematical ideas. Such understandings about the use of Aboriginal knowledge in school education are still very new, and it will take time before these tentative initiatives can be formalized into programs in each subject area in the various languages that are used as media of instruction in the Northern Territory.

As an aside, I think I should mention that I have worked in two systems of Aboriginal education. I taught at Yirrkala for several years in the sixties in an English-only program and was frequently aware that if the children themselves could not sort out the linguistic and conceptual confusion we had created for them there was not a lot — apart from urging them to work harder — that we

as teachers could do to help them. In the seventies I helped establish a bilingual program at Yirrkala. Although there were many real frustrations, there were also many exciting developments. Aboriginal teachers, because of the confidence engendered by being able to teach in their own language, were able to demonstrate that they could accept professional responsibility. The children were obviously able to find more meaning in the programs that we provided for them and some parents found that they could contribute to their children's school education.

My personal experiences are reflected throughout this paper particularly in the following section where I've not only drawn on my own knowledge but have checked my experiences against those of my colleagues.

Social Consequences of Western Schooling

It was inevitable that institutionalised educational programs, when introduced into Aboriginal communities, would create some social problems. Even in our own society schools have tended to alienate parents from the educational programs designed for their children. In Aboriginal communities the process has been even more thorough, for the schools said by their actions — "leave it to us". They taught unfamiliar skills, such as literacy and numeracy, in a foreign language and made it clear that Aboriginal languages and knowledge had no real part in the school program. To Aboriginal parents who had little comprehension of the education system that had been thrust upon their children, schools were at times seen as agencies of alienation, rather than agencies of education. (It is probably largely conformity to Aboriginal cultural values that has enabled Aboriginal children to resist the pressure non-Aboriginal teachers have put on them to change their ways that has limited the effects of this alienation.)

Many Aboriginal parents have also become quite disillusioned with the failure of the system to achieve the results that have been claimed to be outcomes of the education process. Educators have frequently promised that if children were sent to school, when they grew up they would be able to be teachers, doctors, carpenters, etc, just like the 'whites'. Due to a variety of economic, educational and cultural factors this has not been achieved in many cases. This does not deny the fact that many Aboriginal people are making worthwhile contributions as teachers, carpenters, health workers and community developers in their own communities. But they hold these jobs largely because of their Aboriginality and ability rather than their holding what we consider to be pre-requisite qualifications, so that community dependence on the expertise of non-Aboriginals remains high.

Schools frequently, and often quite unknowingly, have created other problems for Aboriginal communities. When children acquire behavioural patterns that are considered to be socially acceptable and even essential in the eyes of members of the dominant society, problems may be created for the children themselves. For example, children who have learned to look after and retain personal belongings may be regarded as selfish when they return to their homes, where sharing is regarded as an obligation imposed by relationship. In grouping children in classrooms in ways that we consider to be educationally

or administratively convenient we have frequently cut across the taboos and restraints that control social behaviour within Aboriginal groups. In addition, our institutionalised patterns of schooling which remove children from the company of their parents for so much of each day has meant that some children have had less time to absorb the knowledge, values and attitudes that are inherent in gaining and maintaining a secure Aboriginal identity which is vital to children who must become bi-cultural. In a society with no formalised teaching function it has often been difficult for adults to appreciate what is happening until it is too late.

Finally, it has to be acknowledged that although there have been some successful students, and some hard working and perceptive teachers have achieved remarkable results, the majority of children have nevertheless failed to gain little more than minimal standards in the areas of English oracy, literacy and numeracy (Williams Report, 1979). They seem to have reached a plateau at about the level of Year 3 or 4 and have not progressed beyond that point. For many Aboriginal children, school has made no sense at all. They have been — and in many cases still are being — schooled but not educated. They have really only acquired a set of school behaviours in much the same way as a child can gain a set of school clothes. All this school-like behaviour is frequently shed, like school clothes, as children leave the buildings. There are few bridges between home and school for the children to walk and the small amount of school knowledge gained often finds no place in the real world of life in an Aboriginal community and is soon forgotten.

The absence of these bridges is not only the fault of the school system but a whole complex set of circumstanes in present day Aboriginal society, some of them insoluble. Aboriginal parents frequently ask that the school teach their children English oracy, literacy and numeracy. But they cannot understand why it is that what their children receive is not sufficient for their needs, why it has to be gained at the cost of Aboriginal knowledge and identity, nor why aspects of non-Aboriginal culture cannot be taught to their children as skills to be used as required, and not as a value system that must be utterly absorbed, with disorienting results for the recipient. If schooling of Aboriginal children is ever to be more successful, these patterns of alienation and disillusionment must be overcome.

In spite of all the cultural and social factors that have created distance between Aboriginal children and the school education provided for them, a small number of children were able to make academic progress. It is this group of people, with the skills and knowledge of two cultures, who are providing much of the input into the innovative educational programs currently being developed, which are aimed at reducing distance between Aboriginal children and school education.

Looking to the Future

The Importance of First Language in the Education of Aboriginal Children

Two interesting research projects into the effectiveness of bilingual education produced evidence of some lessening of distance between Aboriginal

children and education. When studying the Creole speaking children at Bamyili and Beswick Murtagh (1979) found that the children who had received their early education in the bilingual program at Bamyili had less interference between their two languages, Creole and English, and greater control of each separate language than did the children educated in the English-only program at Beswick. Research conducted at Milingimbi (Gale *et al*, 1980) showed quite conclusively that children educated in the bilingual program performed significantly better than those in the English-only program in a range of tests covering English oracy, literacy and numeracy.

Overseas research into bilingual education for minority group children (Cummins, 1979) supports the view that it is the development and enrichment of the child's first language which will lead to cognitive gains for the child in addition to giving him greater growth in his second language. Bilingual education in the Northern Territory up to this time has really meant 'bi-literacy' education. The development and implementation of *oral* bilingual education programs into all those Aboriginal schools, which for language reasons will never have a vernacular literacy program, appears to be another step that could be taken in achieving more meaningful education for all Aboriginal children who come to school speaking a language other than English (note 2).

Parental Involvement in Children's Education

To effectively draw on Aboriginal knowledge to provide learning experiences for Aboriginal children means that the patterns of alienation of the past have to be overcome and parents (and relatives) have to become key people in the planning for and provision of educational services for their children. This is a completely new idea in most Aboriginal communities. To many Aboriginal parents, schools were there to teach foreign skills; gaining an education was not seen as developing knowledge you already partly know, but being immersed (or submerged) in another language and another system of knowledge. That education should, in fact, make sense to the recipients and capitalise on what students bring with them to school, has not been perceived by much of Aboriginal Australia.

However, throughout the Northern Territory an often tentative dialogue is beginning and developing as Aboriginal teachers, non-Aboriginal teachers, and in some instances, parents are meeting together to talk about how and what children should learn. Hopefully, when involvement of Aboriginal adults becomes more widespread, barriers that have been created between the Aboriginal child and school education will be removed. For in the words of some Aboriginal adults involved in the development of ethnoscience materials:

> Aboriginal people are happy to help give their children the right education. They are waiting to be asked. If European teachers find it hard then they should ask Aboriginal people for help. It is not a job to do alone — we should share it. It might be hard to start because Aboriginal parents have not been part of schools for very long and are not sure if they are really wanted. (Quoted in McGill, 1980).

Because many teachers find difficulty in working with adults in this way, *Wangkami: A Handbook for Aboriginal Teachers Involved in Aboriginal Early Childhood Education* (Graham, 1981) has been prepared and is currently being trialled. It could well be that ultimate effectiveness of Aboriginal education may depend on the ability of Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal adults involved in the education of Aboriginal children to establish relationships in which meaningful dialogue about school learning can occur. But we need to remember that Aboriginal culture was developed and nurtured in a 'timeless' land. Aboriginal people are not able to adopt new roles quickly. And so curriculum development that draws meaningfully on the Aboriginal system of knowledge will take time.

The Development of Aboriginal Teachers

The Aboriginal Teacher Education Centre, now known as Batchelor College, is beginning to have a profound influence in reducing the distance between Aboriginal children and education (note 3). Aboriginal assistant-teachers and teachers are not only able to communicate fully with Aboriginal children but are aware of their social and cultural heritage. They have knowledge of both cultures and so are able to provide more appropriate learning experiences. They also provide acceptable successful adult models for the children they teach.

In addition to the three-year course available at Batchelor, on-site courses are now offered on a rotating basis in the larger Aboriginal communities. This enables students to complete their first year of studies without leaving home and coping with the social problems created by such a move. A tutorial program is now available in small remote communities where on-site courses would not be practical.

Specialist Training for Non-Aboriginal Staff

As long ago as 1964 Watts and Gallagher made it clear that Aboriginal education was a specialist field and yet unlike other areas of special need in our society, e.g. education of the deaf or handicapped, little has been done to ensure a supply of specially trained teachers to work in Aboriginal schools. The development of many of the initiatives I have already outlined (in addition to the development of on-site secondary education and the provision of educational services to remote outstation communities) is dependent, to a large degree, on the specialist training of non-Aboriginal staff. In the future, as Aboriginal staff take more responsibility in Aboriginal schools, the need for fewer and better trained non-Aboriginal teachers will become even more crucial. It is an area that must receive urgent attention if we are to continue to look to the future in Aboriginal education.

Conclusion

The barriers between the Aboriginal child and school education are beginning to be broken down but the millenium is not about to begin. Many of the socio-economic and cultural factors referred to previously will continue to operate in Aboriginal society in the foreseeable future and are beyond the control of educators. They are hidden deep within the fabric of Aboriginal

society and will continue to be resistant to rapid change. But in spite of difficulties, "Education-for-what?" is a question that we must continue to urge Aboriginal people to answer before school education will better meet the needs of their children. Answers to that question are not always easy to find. Programs of self-help and self-management may eventually provide some of the answers, but people involved will have to accept that the paths that will be taken by traditionally-oriented Aboriginal people are likely to be vastly different from those which enable members of the dominant society to achieve their goals.

In the meantime those people involved in Aboriginal education must begin to conceive of educational programs that will enable Aboriginal children to find meaning and purpose in their educational experience. We must design programs that recognise difference and allow Aboriginal children to gain an education under the same educational principles as all other children do, i.e. by moving from the things they know to the things they need to learn, using language or languages that they understand. Compulsive conformity to programs designed for mainstream Australia inevitably sets the stage for inequality in education for an Aboriginal child, but recognition of difference enables Aboriginal children to have access to equal educational opportunity because it allows them to use their own strengths to cope with new situations.

Finally, educators must begin to conceive of education in terms of Aboriginal survival — survival as distinctly Aboriginal, but also as effective people in a modern world. They must not try to educate people out of their heritage, for anyone who wishes to live effectively must know who he is, where he has come from, and where he is going. Aboriginal parents know that their children need English oracy, literacy and numeracy and many of the skills of the white man, but above all they know that their children need to be Aboriginal, to live with pride and dignity in a world over which they have some control. An American Indian woman (Collier, 1973:121) in a similar situation said quite simply:

> I can't predict how my children should be educated but one thing I know is if my children are proud, if my children have identity, if my children know who they are, they will be able to encounter anything in life. I think that is what education means.

Notes

1. This report outlined two approaches to Bilingual education. Only Model 1 programs which allow the child to gain literacy in the vernacular before gaining literacy in English have been developed to this time. Presently programs are operating in twelve languages in fifteen schools, with another five schools in preparation. As these programs have been established in larger Aboriginal schools, nearly half the Aboriginal children from traditionally-oriented communities are receiving their education in both their mother tongue and English. These bilingual programs are presently undergoing accreditation by the Department of Education.

2. The Watts, McGrath and Tandy Report (1973) allowed also for the development of purely oral bilingual programs (Model 2). This encourages the use of two languages as media of instruction even though the child will gain literacy only in English. For a variety of reasons this approach to bilingual education has not been developed. Due to an increased awareness

of the importance of a child's first language in his total educational experience there should be greater concern to develop these programs.

3. To this time 25 Aboriginal students have gained their Aboriginal Schools Teaching Certificate at the conclusion of three years of training which may have been spread over a much larger period of time. This qualification gives them permanent status in the Commonwealth Teaching Service as two-year trained teachers. Many other students have completed various stages of the program for which they receive accreditation as Assistant Teachers at appropriate levels. It is hoped that a fourth year of study will soon be available which will receive national accreditation and students will then graduate with a Diploma of Teaching.

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WE ARE GOING TO TEACH ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

M. BRANDL

In this paper some strategies for relieving the isolation of non-Aboriginal teachers of Aboriginal children are considered.

Isolation is not just a physical or geographical phenomenon. Human beings can feel isolated and act accordingly in the closest physical proximity to one another. Cultural isolation characterises much of what happens, and does not happen, in education in those parts of Australia remote from the urban and suburban south.

This kind of isolation is manifested not only in what teachers do and what happens to teachers in remote areas, but also in students. It is nowhere more apparent than in schools in Aboriginal communities. Non-Aboriginal teachers are largely unaware of Aboriginal philosophies, objectives and methodologies in educating Aboriginal children. Moreover, such teachers are isolated from Aboriginal society as well by substantial social and cultural barriers.

Finally, such teachers are isolated from their own philosophies and theories in education which largely state that education should both reflect and reinforce the culture from which students come. Learning theorists say similar things. As a result of this isolation their students, who are not culturally isolated at all from their own people, are deprived in wider Australian society, as well as being denied skills and knowledge and effective participation in their own.

Introduction

> "The fact remains that I know more about the English children I teach now, after a few months, than I knew about the Nigerian boys I taught for five years." (Elliott, 1970: viii).

This statement was made by an Englishman about teaching in Nigeria. It could have been made by any one of hundreds of non-Aboriginal teachers about their experiences with teaching Aboriginal children in Australia — and not only in remote communities. The statement is a summary of the type of isolation on which I want to focus in this paper.

The statement is a counterpart to findings I have made throughout a three year examination of the impact of government programs on Aboriginal children and families. One of the major problems, if not the gravest in Aboriginal education, is the lack of knowledge about Aborigines which characterises most non-Aborigines who work with them, particularly those in government employment.

This ignorance of the way of life of a people amongst whom they live affects not only their work and the lives of their students, but it also has profound effects on teachers' job satisfaction and efficiency, as well as their well being.

In past years such teachers have often attracted attention and some blame for the overall low achievement of their students. Whether or not some were and are poor teachers is a risk any school system takes. The point is that other and greater handicaps than an inability to teach are at issue here. On the whole these handicaps are beyond the control of any one or even a group of teachers to do much about. They can be shown to be part and parcel of a special kind of isolation.

I want first to examine the nature of this isolation and its results, in particular, paradoxes and inconsistencies in the application of accepted educational theory in Aboriginal schools. Then I want to show some ways to resolve these, thereby hopefully making it possible for teachers to be less isolated and more effective. From time to time I will refer to the isolation of Aboriginal students in the school setting, a subject with which my research deals in detail and about which others at this conference have spoken. My subject here, their teachers, is the reverse side of that isolation, and a vital aspect of the poor educational status of Aborigines.

The Isolation of Non-Aboriginal Teachers in Aboriginal Communities

Isolation, as we know, is not just the result of physical or geographical separation from one's kind. It is, above all, a mental and emotional phenomenon and can occur even in the closest proximity to others.

Non-Aboriginal teachers in remote Aboriginal communities are separated by geographical distance from family, friends, colleagues and their own cultural milieu. They live in close proximity to people who are not family or colleagues and with whom they do not share common culture, values, attitudes, beliefs and behaviour. They have come to these communities to teach in school, not an unusual reason for teachers to leave home, but their students are indigenous children.

Thus far they resemble expatriate teachers to New Guinea or Africa more than they resemble teachers in another Australian town. Yet, paradoxically, they are not living abroad in another country; they are at home in their own country. This paradox has certain definite, observable effects on them.

Teachers (and other non-Aborigines) come to Aboriginal communities with few of the pressures to accommodate the local indigenous culture that bear upon expatriate teachers in countries where the indigenous population both outnumbers the newcomers and has political power locally and nationally. Yet Australian Aboriginal settlements, in many respects, present a third world-style situation albeit within the borders of a modern, industrial society.

This interplay within Australia between a migrant majority population and an indigenous minority population has resulted in government policies which, until very recently, have never entertained the possibility that Aborigines might wish to manage their own place within the modern world. Indeed it has often been most explicitly stated that they will become more like the majority population. Teaching programs for Aborigines have consequently never been aimed at grooming the future leaders of their country — as they have in New Guinea, for example. Policies, at least at the formal level, have changed. But their implementation largely has not. Teachers (among other members of the majority population) have rarely perceived any advantages — personal or educational — in learning local Aboriginal languages, for example.

Measures taken by the various state and federal authorities to recruit and install non-indigenous employees into Aboriginal communities in Australia

have rarely included induction courses orienting them to working in a cross-cultural, specifically Aboriginal, specifically local situation. At best they are overviews which predispose them to expect — and not to be able to explain — differences. Screening to ascertain whether a recruit is suitable for employment among Aborigines is still not systematically done, to my knowledge.

Crucial attributes like absence of racial prejudice, ability to cope with stress and isolation, qualifications in the teaching of English as a second language, the ability and desire to learn languages, and qualifications in an accepted course of Aboriginal studies, are given scant attention when appraising a teacher's application. Yet they are basic to a non-Aboriginal's well-being and effectiveness in an Aboriginal community. Recruitment to overseas service in the Foreign Affairs Department or to Australian Volunteers Abroad, to give two quite diverse examples, is not so casually treated, and yet officers of both those organisations encounter very similar situations to those faced by non-Aborigines in remote Aboriginal communities.

The very measures that are taken by governments to ensure the well-being of their employees there — good salaries with a range of allowances, suburban-type housing, food and freight assistance — only increase the cultural distance between themselves and Aborigines.

Aboriginal society is not the easiest of the world's societies for a stranger to enter, especially one from a people with whom they have had mostly unhappy experiences over the past two hundred years. The nature of Aboriginal society is such that it takes an outsider a long time to be accepted in a community. A newcomer has to prove oneself — as a person, defined in Aboriginal terms, and Aborigines like to assess behaviour over time and in diverse situations. Consequently a teacher, although not the only teacher to have worked in a particular community, often feels he/she is being assessed in that way.

Isolated and alienated from what is familiar to them, and yet in their own homeland, they are often on the defensive. They resort to asserting what they know and who they are. It is a typical human response to a stressful situation. Their goal was given them on recruitment: "You are going to teach Aboriginal children," and so they do, in the only way they know and to the best of their ability. In all good faith, they teach their Aboriginal students in the same way as they would teach any others in Australia.

In these circumstances it does not take very long for problems to emerge in a number of areas. Let us look only at the educational ones. A study in Western Australia by Makin (1977) summarises the kinds of problems encountered by teachers in classrooms with a fairly high proportion of Aborigines. As stated by teachers:

> "The basic problem . . . is really the solving of the problem of intellectual retardation . . ." (*ibid.*: 233).

In particular subject areas:

Spoken English. Problems: "Getting the children to vocalise was a major problem in all reasons . . . Generally, the responses indicated that Aboriginal children commence school with a variety of non-standard English dialects which inhibit or create great difficulties for the development of English language . . ."

Mathematics. Problems: "Most teachers seem to consider the 'cultural environment' area to be a major limiting problem in all regions in the State . . ."

Such perceptions, undoubtedly accurate *as far as they go,* give rise to stereotypes such as: Aboriginal children are intellectually retarded, having great difficulties with English and mathematics. The stereotypes isolate teachers further from what is clearly observable if they had been better prepared: many Aboriginal children speak several languages, and Aborigines make mathematical judgements many times each day in the context of their own life-styles. And, above all, members of a group that is the oldest, continuing human society cannot be intellectually retarded.

Parts of the school curriculum where teaching appears successful such as art, singing and sport, give rise to other stereotypes, which might at first glance appear positive (Lippman, 1978:8), but are stereotypes nonetheless.

To categorise Aborigines as having no mathematical sense or linguistic ability or a poor sense of future planning is very like blaming factory workers for their inability to hear in a noisy workshop. The classrooms in Aboriginal schools are culturally "noisy" learning environments. Part of the "noise" stems from the fact that Aborigines have a different concept of education from ours. I refer not only to ideas about *what* a child should know in becoming an adult, but also to ideas about *how* a child should learn. Children have already been launched into the Aboriginal education system by the time they encounter ours (see Snowdon, 1981).

Let me illustrate what might be the lineaments of their view of education with a statement from a very similar society of hunter-gatherers in North America. On 17 June 1744 English commissioners from Maryland and Virginia negotiated a treaty with the Indians of the so-called six Nations at Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The Indians were invited to send boys to patrician William and Mary College. The next day the leaders declined by saying that while they realised the commissioners were offering what they thought was the best education available and at considerable expense, ". . . You, who are wise must know that different Nations have different conceptions of things and you will therefore not take it amiss, if our ideas of this kind of Education happen not to be the same as yours. We have had some experience of it." Some of their young men had returned from an English-type education ". . . ignorant of every means of living in the woods . . . Neither fit to be Hunters, Warriors, nor Councillors, they were totally good for nothing." They then offered to educate a dozen English boys "and make Men of them" (Drake, 1834:27).

To my knowledge their counter-offer was not accepted. Were Aborigines

to make us a similar offer, how many of us would send our children to them? We might argue among ourselves about our educational system, but we feel confident that it is more suitable for our children than the system of any other people. We do not, however, in Australia allow Aborigines to feel that way.

Aborigines, too, argue about what are the components of a good education for their children. But they are clear about its objectives: to enable their children to grow up to be Aboriginal. They have been doing that with some proven success for over 40,000 years in this country (see Mulvaney, 1975) and have therefore more reason than we to be confident about their educational system. Over that length of time they have been confronted many times with new content in that education — changing climates and ecology and the consequent effects on flora and fauna, new ideas and behaviours from their encounters with visitors, like the Japanese and Macassans, and with neighbouring Aboriginal groups. In the latter respect, an outstanding example from historical times is the spread of the subsection system (of classifying kin relationships) from group to group throughout vast areas of Australia (Berndt and Berndt, 1964:48).

In all this time they have never been subjected, in such a large-scale and consistent fashion as they have in the last two hundred years, to new styles of action based on such a vastly contrasting system of values. Human beings in such circumstances have a number of courses of action and Aborigines have probably tried all of them. One is to shun the new, a course I do not think many have taken and certainly not those presently resettling their traditional lands. A second is to meld elements of the new with the familiar, using one's own cultural styles to make the necessary adjustments and adaptations. It is that singularly successful form of adaptation peculiar to human societies known as integration (see Freire, 1976:4). It takes time and depends on the amount of control over crucial decisions held by the person making the adjustments.

A third course of action is to abandon the familiar entirely, a course which some attempt and many were openly encouraged to do so by past government policies. It is demonstrably more difficult than the second course and most Aborigines have been reluctant to take it. Not surprisingly, they have preferred the second, even where large amounts of knowledge have been lost to present-day Aborigines. Not only identity, but distinctive cultural traits, mark out many thousands in this country. My research findings show that the processes of socialisation are one of these traits, processes which reinforce traditional Aboriginal ideals and values. Above all I refer to how children learn and how older people teach them. Let us look for a moment at some of these.

Aboriginal Styles of Learning and Teaching

Hamilton (1970) and S. Harris (1980) have pioneered the work in this field.

Central to Aboriginal values, and the source of many, is a respect for the inherent dignity of a human being (von Sturmer, 1980). We judge this to be so, for if we accept this, much in Aboriginal social behaviour can be explained. A person who shows self-respect and respect for others is considered by

Aborigines to be a typical adult. Aborigines value quiet, confident people, who are sensitive, noticing and who behave appropriately in each situation. This is not to say that all behaviour is prescribed. Much that happens in Aboriginal social life is unexpected, in fact, and each situation must be handled within the parameters of a number of constraints — who is present and who is not and one's relationship to these others, for example. One of the many, but more important, guides in interpersonal situations then is the value given to respect for human dignity.

Quiet, confident behaviour need not be humble or unassertive, either. But it is rarely angry or uncontrolled. Such behaviour offends others. So do sharp, critical, direct comments. Immodest behaviour, by men or women, is likewise unacceptable. Looking directly into the eyes of another person is impolite. (People who transgress accepted codes of behaviour while in an intoxicated state from alcohol are not considered to be in control of themselves, and are generally excused.)

Such restraint on especially verbal behaviour is one of the reasons why non-verbal communication is so important among Aborigines, who use a gesture or movement of the body, head, eyes, lips or eyebrows to communicate. We have often been told by Aborigines what we are feeling or thinking when we thought we were being phlegmatic. They interpret non-verbal cues whether they are made deliberately or involuntarily. Hence, too, the value of self-control. It is important to note that in a cross-cultural situation such signs can be and often are misinterpreted.

As an extension of valuing human dignity and avoiding offence or giving offence is the importance of harmony in social relationships. This is maintained by a number of social mechanisms, the most well-known among Aborigines being the networks of kin, with their associated roles, rights and obligations. The operation of these networks involves any one person in fairly clearly defined behaviour and expectations towards a limited number of others, not to all.

Another mechanism for maintaining free-running relationships is the principle of reciprocity and this is also part of kin relationships. Doing something for another person or giving something, places an obligation on the recipient to repay. The return of the favour does not, however, terminate the mutual obligations, but begins a life-long imperative to engage in reciprocal activities with that other person. As in the case of mother-child relationships, for example, it is only at about age thirty or later that the obligations of mother towards child, 'turn' to the reverse.

Harmonious living is an ideal. In day-to-day life disputes always arise, especially now that Aborigines are exposed to values from European-Australian society, which cut into and partially displace their own. Our western emphasis on the rights of the individual, for example, can provoke painful decisions in troubled situations today, for Aborigines and non-Aborigines alike. Throughout what is written here, the reader must bear in mind that while the Aboriginal values we describe still shape contemporary

Aboriginal behaviour, many individuals can and do use alternative guides for action, which derive from wider Australian society. This is particularly true whenever people have long been acquainted with non-Aboriginal outsiders. Some individuals have less difficulty than others in melding different value systems. Successful adjustment would appear to depend on a person's self-confidence and sense of security in his or her identity.

Aborigines everywhere have intricate and effective traditionally-oriented mechanisms for settling disputes and controlling social order. Rarely is a relationship severed permanently, save by death, of course. Transgressors are not ostracised, isolated or separated from their family, kin and community. They regard our prison and rehabilitation centres as inhuman. Two types of sanctions operate, one more formal than the other. Punishment is meted out and usually accepted. Gossip is a more informal deterrent. At a personal level the feeling of 'shame' is felt whenever an individual's sense of personal dignity has been attacked, by the behaviour of others or by the 'shamed' individuals own behaviour. When 'shame' is extreme, psychosomatic symptoms of alienation appear and the blame for a person's disorientation will often be attributed to sorcery or malevolent power. It is interesting that one treatment for human beings affected by such power at Belyuen is to provide a constant, caring companion and to expose the patient to children at play; perhaps an attempt to resocialise the 'sick' one.

I have seen individuals do and say things which would have put them beyond the pale, permanently, in one of our own communities. Aboriginal kin and community members, however, say. 'So-and-so will come good. We just wait. So-and-so should spend more time at home with us, though'.

All of these matters, and more, need to be known and understood by a teacher before he or she enters an Aboriginal community. Part of the task will be to apply this understanding in interactions with members of the community. The work, we discovered, will be easier and more effective if the teacher recognises the conflicting cultural styles, respects them and lets them operate. This is particularly true of learning styles.

Learning Styles

Learning by Doing

For an Aboriginal person learning to perform a task, *the social cost of making a mistake is greater than that of admitting ignorance*. Saying "I don't know" is not taking the lazy or easy way out. It often means what is said and, additionally, "I am not ready yet". (In many situations it can mean, too, "It is not my right to speak on this matter.") It stands in stark contrast to the oft-heard European-Australian contention that one can only learn by making mistakes. It does not mean that children (and others) do not receive, nor respond, to encouragement. They do. But they are not urged to "have a go", or "give it a burl, because anyone can make a mistake". Individual children, of course, have their own inclinations which differ from the prevailing cultural style. There is the European-Australian child whose impulse is to stand back and wait, and on the other hand, the Aboriginal child who is willing to try

anything. My point is that in the wider social context, European-Australian parents and families value one behaviour, and Aborigines the other. In fact, we can call this kind of emphasis a cultural value, one of the cores of any heritage.

Aboriginal children (and adults) practise performances, especially when alone and unobserved, or in groups of peers. But when it is "The Performance" only those who feel confident and ready, and only those are expected to, perform.

I once watched a group of senior women and men at Belyuen teaching girls and boys to dance. The teaching was not a demonstration, as we are used to in classrooms. The men sang, beat the clapsticks and blew the didgeridus. The women beat time with their hands or by clapping their things while seated. The children danced, boys in the *wongga* style, and girls in their *mirrag* style. Occasionally one or other women would call, "listen to the beat", or "follow the clapsticks", or "don't get too close to one another" or "go forward now" and so on. The direction was given to individual children by the appropriate kinswoman. Once, men varied the beat unexpectedly. Several children faltered. The watchers laughed, genuinely amused, for mistakes are funny when their consequences are not serious. Several children sat down. During the next dance only those who felt confident to follow the beat stood up. People commented, "See, so-and-so has it. She knows." Then, slowly, others stood and joined in, when they felt ready.

Aborigines teach by reinforcing correct behaviour and ignoring mistakes if possible. In our own society we pay a lot of attention to mistakes and sometimes forget to notice when people are doing things competently and quietly. A Pakistani teacher told me, "Westerners work on negative reinforcement. If you're doing a job well, nobody cares. It's only when you make mistakes that you get attention." For Aborigines, too, drawing attention to mistakes is embarrassing and works against learning correct behaviour. In non-teaching situations, too, it is polite to ignore mistakes, if one can. If it is crucial to draw attention to an error, it should be done gently and privately, or one can just quietly demonstrate the correct procedure. Successful accomplishment should be praised.

Another thing I learned that night of the dancing lesson is that *Aboriginal people believe that people learn by doing something, not by learning to do it.* Of course all of us learn by doing, whether that is our cultural emphasis or not. (Holt (1977:17) makes the point that our language gives us 'learning to play the cello' and 'playing the cello': as if they were two different processes.) Again I am talking about a difference in emphasis, in values and expectations. One senior woman said to me, "They will never forget now, my friend, once they hear that didgeridu and the beat and then they do it. They can't forget it." She said it rather in the manner I have heard European-Australians talk about swimming, or riding a bicycle, or learning to read. Once you've *done* it, you can never unlearn it.

And the learning is not hard, Aboriginal people say. Some women were

laughing together at Belyuen, mothers and mothers' mothers, over some boys who had dallied on the way to school: "They were doing Kung Fu, just like in the pictures last night. They were good, too. Really good. They can easy learn." That is a phrase I hear often from adults when referring to children. Children learn easily — and I would add — if they do it using their own cultural styles.

Social Context of Learning

One aspect of this style is the social context of learning. School, for example, is on the whole a series of 'learning to do' situations, rather than the real situation. On-the-job experience and creative experiences (for their own sake) are exceptions here. The dancing lessons I described had started in the school, or were attempted there with cassette tapes and one or two Aboriginal women as audience. It was only when the Aboriginal adult educator, herself a senior woman, decided to try it at night and in her own garden that children would stand and dance. In fact, they then "chased" and "looked about" every day for the senior ceremonial men to come and play and sing for them, and hustled mothers and grandmothers out of bed to be there, too. Then it became real for them. One influencing factor here might be their awareness that this activity mattered for their elders. Another could be that they needed the appropriate approval and direction.

Of course, Aborigines, like other humans, do not have to experience all they learn, but their culture emphasises that where possible. And when, as happens with parents looking at the future of their children, they cannot provide all those real experiences, the children are equipped with the learning techniques, the styles for assimilating and making new experiences of their own and for problem-solving.

Co-operation

Two other aspects of Aboriginal learning patterns are fairly well known by outsiders now, I think, but they are rarely acted upon. A strong emphasis in Aboriginal social life everywhere is cooperation. Over 40,000 years of coming to terms with surviving — and living a full and satisfying life — on the Australian continent has taught them to pool their resources. In work situation or a school situation, this needs to be remembered. Some European-Australians may call cooperation cheating or nepotism, and try to discourage it.

This emphasis on cooperation does not mean that Aborigines have no competitive instincts, for all human beings appear to have those. Again I will state that we are talking about behaviour that is valued, approved, set up as an ideal for all members of a group. However, even within that emphasis competition is not excluded. Appeals to it are made in a learning situation. But European-Australians often encourage a child to compete in order to outrank others; Aborigines encourage a child who is lagging to do as well as his peers. Thus, using the example of the dancing I referred to earlier, the adults called out "Look, so-and-so is beating what's-her-name! Come on what's-her-name," or "All the boys are dancing. What are the girls doing? Sitting down. The boys are winning now." The idea of a child attempting the

best he can is common to both, but perhaps Aboriginal parents accept limitations in a child more equably than European-Australians.

Language Styles

We have heard already the most common problems non-Aboriginal teachers face in their classes of Aboriginal students (Makin, 1977). One of these is that Aboriginal children do not vocalise. Even teachers in bilingual education programs say this, where children learn to read and write in their own language. Anyone who has spent time with Aboriginal children out of school in their own surroundings knows that it is not true. Aboriginal children do verbalise, frequently, most vociferously and in fact most of the time. So what is wrong with the teachers' perceptions? Isn't it that Aboriginal children do not verbalise in the classroom situation whether it is in their own language or not? Surely it is connected with what teachers are expecting children to talk about in a classroom — the things they know European-Australian children talk about, or text-books talk about and with which Aboriginal children are not acquainted. There is also the matter of the constraints imposed by the unfamiliar environment of four walls and the fact that buildings orchestrate behaviours (Reser, 1978).

So what do Aboriginal children talk about, to each other and to adults in their normal environment? A lot of their conversation concerns kin relationships and appropriate behaviours that go with specific roles. Learning these is a number one priority in any Aboriginal society. From the time children are born they are being told who their kin are: "There is your uncle," "Here comes your cousin", or "Say mama" and so on. The person pointed out, if within hearing, will always stop and talk to the child and use the reciprocal kin term. I estimate that by the age formal schooling begins, at about five years of age, most children know the main kin terms and expected behaviours. But much remains to be learned: what one can expect from each kinsperson, what one is expected to do for each kinsperson and so on. This kind of talk is going on constantly — not in generalities, of course, but with reference to particular known people. It is not only the use and the practice of relationships that are emphasised, but also the activities of kinsfolk.

Another topic of conversation — perhaps because of its scarcity — is food. If food is available anywhere in an Aboriginal camp, there is always a hungry mouth who can consume it. So the availability of food is important and people talk about the store opening, going hunting and what they might catch, and how they might cook it, and who has been hunting and what they have caught.

Children also spend a deal of time squabbling, sorting out rights and responsibilities. They often appeal to adults to adjudicate for them, or they report perceived injustices and so on. Sometimes adults take notice of this and sometimes not. At times, of course, a dispute between children can develop into a major dispute between kin. Here another cultural value prevails. In the heat of the dispute objective rights and wrongs are often forgotten in minor breaches: "I don't care what she did, but you should not have touched her. If you were not an ill woman I would strike you." A third or fourth person will leap in to defend whomever their obligations tie them more closely: "You

should not speak to my daughter that way. Your mouth will get you into serious trouble."

Some children's disputes are the result of teasing. Non-conformity in any matter can be an excuse for teasing. Its social function seems to be to draw more clearly the lines of definition among groups who are very similar indeed and thus aids in preserving the distinctive heritage of a group. It also seems to serve to test the equanimity of a child and gives practice in that most necessary of attributes in a very public society — a non-commital face.

So children everywhere talk, but they talk about different things in different cultures. We are talking here about different language styles. Aborigines, moreover, do not verbalise when they can use alternative communication. Their languages have been spoken for most of their history in the open camp situation, where it is useful to have other forms of communication as well as the spoken word. Eyes, lips, gestures, body position and expressions are all used for communication. Non-verbal communication is useful in hunting and stalking, too.

Another difference in language style concerns the use of repetition in language as a communication device. Oral stories use it with gestures and exclamations, which are not needed of course when a language is written down and stories re-told in that way. On the other hand more mundane communications may use fewer words than the English language style, particularly ordinary conversation. Near Yirrkala is a bilingual notice warning that blasting at the Nabalco mine is going on. In English it says: "Danger. Blasting. Keep off", and underneath it in a local Aboriginal language: "Wanga Madakuraitj", which means simply, "Dangerous Place".

If, therefore, non-Aborigines encourage and require and expect Aborigines to verbalise about topics which belong to the English language style in certain formal situations, and in a manner which belongs to the English language style, they are going against the grain of the local culture. They are also neglecting the non-verbal styles which are part of Aboriginal traditions.

Mathematical Learning

Another frequent complaint of teachers is that Aboriginal children appear to have little or no mathematical understanding (Makin, 1977). Anyone who has even a passing acquaintance with their kinship system will know that this is not so. Manipulating these involves complicated permutations and combinations and variations very difficult, I am told, even to computerise.

Aborigines are excellent judges of space in their hunting techniques, in leaping and running. They also can estimate very well how far a given quantity of food will go among those to be fed. Women judge accurately, and quite finely, the relative amounts of flour (plain and self-raising) and other ingredients which will produce the perfect damper. These judgements are based on relativity and proportion, rather than exact measurements.

Or take time and tide. The coastal people, for example, can estimate

through observation and experience, the height of the tides and the time they had to do their hunting and gathering in tidal zones. Wagaidj and Larrakia people around the Cox Peninsula speak of high tide as "full", and use other expressions like "half-way down" for the time between high and low tides.

Or take time of day. They use the position of the sun (usually indicated more accurately in the sky than we do) to label times of day. Those few who wear watches learn how we name the hours very quickly. When we say they do not know the time of day, we are really saying they do not know our names for the time of day.

Their catch, if the supply is there in quantity, never exhausts what is available, but is always governed by who is to be fed. They cease gathering when they have enough to feed themselves and their dependants at a base camp, or home. Determining what is enough is a mathematical judgement.

When a ceremony is coming up it never fails to astonish the resident anthropologist that people are rarely late, or running down the road half-dressed or half-decorated. Often hundreds of people are involved and that requires careful organisation. Their preparations and timing are very carefully gauged and adjusted to the activities and directions of a few key people.

In making craft or ceremonial objects mathematical, as well as aesthetic, judgements are used. At Belyuen in 1980 a women's ceremony was held for which women had to weave woollen belts. This was done with no tape measure and all fitted the wearer. The crucial measurement was the first — around the waist. From this all other lengths of wool were measured. I have seen men cutting a number of spears in a similar way. Aborigines are expert at making do with what is at hand. They do not always insist on accuracy or 'rightness' in materials or quantities. They do however insist on appropriate materials and accurate proportions.

Their notions of the order of events in time has different emphases from western Europeans (see the work of Ziergnoff Klich from the University of New England). Psychologist Graham Davidson (from the same University) has looked at Aboriginal card playing techniques and shown that the style of mathematical judgements made there differ from those of people in different traditions, but mathematical they certainly are. Research is continuing into this aspect of Aboriginal knowledge and undoubtedly will reveal more understanding for outsiders of Aboriginal styles in mathematical thought (see Harris, P., 1980). The work of Greenfield and Bruner (1969) into what it means, intellectually, to grow up in one cultural milieu and not another may shed more light on the difficulties of teachers of mathematics to Aboriginal children. Their findings indicate that simply being in school makes a huge difference to the intellectual life of a child — from whatever culture he comes.

Cultural Environment

Many teachers and others see the cultural environment of the Aborigines as a major limiting problem in their formal education, western style (Makin, 1977). At Yirrkala in early 1979 non-Aborigines complained about the amount

of time Aboriginal children and adults were spending at the mortuary rites for four old people, being held simultaneously and naturally, therefore, large-scale. Such an occasion, incidentally, comes perhaps once in any person's lifetime. The attendance and participation in singing and dancing over a two month period was a joyous and solemn celebration of Aboriginality which went unacknowledged and unwitnessed by the majority of non-Aborigines in the area. Children and adults were learning there what they could never learn in school and on the job — how to be Aboriginal. Adults were not only learning — for socialisation is a lifelong experience — but reinforcing their identity. Being confident about who one is and what that means in a group whose members must be like one another in many ways are main functions of socialisation anywhere. One percipient teacher in the area said that Aboriginal parents do not spurn skills like literacy; they want those for their children but, above all, they want them to be Aboriginal — which is no more than all parents want for their offspring — to carry on the cultural heritage. So it is not a question of either one education or another. Both are seen by Aborigines to be relevant. My point is that one can support the other if non-Aborigines recognise and use the Aboriginal's own cultural styles and do not see them as opposed to what they are doing.

Time and again in my field experiences I have seen the force of that last statement. During ceremonies young children will often get up to imitate their older kin. In hunting sometimes children notice a crab or other game. People react very approvingly to this, cheering and encouraging them to continue. Educationists and psychologists call that *reinforcing learning*. As the woman I quoted earlier said, "They will never forget that". By contrast, in a classroom closed off from the outside world a child learns mostly unnoticed. One teacher — probably from outside a child's society and therefore not a person from whom a child will seek crucial approval for behaviour — cannot provide the reinforcement that occurs in the open home or camp situation, if indeed the child's particular achievement is noted at all in a class of many learners.

Aboriginal Childhood

Aborigines have not yet, as Western Europeans have, invented childhood (Plumb, 1978:4). To somewhat overstate the case further, their children still live in an adult-centred world as opposed to a child-centred one. Elaborate mass-produced toys, games, books and entertainment are all relatively new ideas and mostly seen and used only at school. In our society even the words 'boy', 'garcon', 'knave' and so on were used differently before the seventeenth century. They meant "dependent" just as they did when used about Aborigines in the Australia of yesteryear, and probably in some rural areas today. Children throughout most of human history have started "work" early, dressed like their parents and lived in houses or environments which were not divided into special rooms or places for most of the day's activities. Children were not kept separate from the adult world, and in fact took on responsibilities in gradual ways. Aboriginal settlements and camps are still rather like this today. One could argue that the need for literacy in a rapidly changing economic environment — the industrial revolution, trade expansion and so on — initiated the invention of childhood, just as it invented school as we know it. Indeed learning to be literate and learning modern nursing and

medical techniques and so on take a long time and require perhaps certain particular training and teaching methodologies not present in non-literate societies. We could still ask, though, if children need to be separated from adult activities as much as they are in the modern world.

Aboriginal villages do have problems, of course, not least among which is that in the Northern Territory in 1973 one baby in twelve died before it was twelve months old and still, in 1979, one in twenty-two died. For non-Aborigines, one baby in one hundred and two died before it was twelve months old in 1979 in the Northern Territory. Despite this Aboriginal living environments retain a richness which other Australian communities have lost. Take some of the learning situations — and I have mentioned some already. Children do have their own play activities and play groups, but these are imitative of adult activities on the whole. Adult activities proceed in a way that takes in children rather than excluding them. For example, both hunting and gathering parties include children. Sometimes the hunters' pace is geared to the age of the children, but what normally happens is that if children are too young to keep up, they are left behind with a grandmother or older sibling, while the rest of the party goes on. Older children will accompany adults on hunting and foraging activities, at least part of the way. They are not expected to catch game, at least not game of the same size and in the same quantity that adults do, but there are smaller-sized creatures to hunt. At Belyuen, for example, women go hunting from a resting place during an expedition. Girls of 8, 9 and 10 years of age do not accompany them into the mangroves where it is arduous work for young limbs to catch crabs. They go, however, on an excursion of their own to get small rock crabs, easily caught by them. In no way could one consider these as any more than snacks. But the children are practising skills of hunting and cooking and also contributing a little to the family larder.

Now that many parents work in larger settlements and children are in school during these hours, the same opportunities for being involved in adult activities do not occur. Perhaps it is true that learning the skills of reading and writing require systematic concentration in a classroom situation (and this needs investigation as I have said), but there are many school activities and a lot of the curriculum which would not require children to be separate from their elders.

Unlike what we might expect from Western European situations, Aboriginal children do not live continuously with their parents. They live for periods with older married siblings, or aunties and uncles, or with a father's other wives. Some live with mother's mother, or father's mother.

Although a child is of course a mother's responsibility primarily, this responsibility is shared with others. These include men, especially mother's brother, even where very young children are concerned. Men, married and unmarried, fathers and non-fathers, handle young children in affective ways, call them by an appropriate kin term and encourage an appropriate reply. They play with older children and are accompanied by them, particularly boys, on everyday activities, where schedules permit this. They are not indifferent

to, nor frightened by, children nor are children indifferent to or frightened by them. At even most serious moments when a senior man is explaining or making a point, he is never too busy to pick up a young relative who might need attention. Boys sit on their father's laps while the clapsticks are beaten. Sometimes they will even have their own. Small children are held by mothers as they dance.

Aboriginal children have little need for mass-produced toys — which does not mean they do not enjoy them. But they are permitted to handle and investigate all things within reach. Objects that people do not want children to handle are kept away from them, or gently removed. As for the rest — clothes, paper, boxes, tins, wrappings, all the camp flotsam and jetsam, insects, small animals and so on — children are permitted to investigate, improvise with and manipulate to, and beyond, breaking point. Non-Aborigines often view this behaviour as destructive. Another way to look at this is to see it as a way of becoming thoroughly familiar with your environment. In the past and still today the survival of people depends on knowing the environment and the habits of its creatures, especially those that provide food sources. Even in a place like Belyuen, where no one has grown up unaware of a European presence for several generations now, people still hunt, and in fact depend on hunting for the protein elements in their diet and for fresh vegetables. The average *per capita* income in Aboriginal settlements is far from enough to offset the cost of living in remote areas of Australia (see Young, 1979 and Turnbull, 1980:98-101). People go out whenever they can get away from education and employment commitments, so that knowing the environment and how to hunt and forage are still crucial skills. It is, for some, the only place where they can afford to eat.

Communication Styles

Aborigines use non-verbal communication as much as verbal. European-Australians are not very observant or responsive to non-verbal clues, compared with Aborigines. We often use words where Aborigines use a gesture or a movement of the body, head, eyes, lips or eyebrows. Silence also is a way of communicating. Whether aware of it or not, each of us communicates non-verbally. A teacher expressing disapproval at an untidily-dressed child through words as well as facial expressions can be misinterpreted. The child feels deeply ashamed, as a person, while the teacher feels annoyed about the untidiness of the clothes.

On the other hand, Aborigines are not as responsive as Westerners to verbal cues, particularly when these are in a foreign language, English. They have other ways of indicating whether they have understood a lesson. In verbal communication teachers should use structures and vocabulary at their students' level of language competence and experience. Yet it is far better to talk at a more sophisticated level than to talk down.

Aborigines rarely display extremes of emotions. Westerners often show irritation or displeasure at trivial things. Aborigines save their strong displays for really serious occasions or grave exasperation. If a colleague speaks sternly, let alone loudly or angrily, at them for less than the most serious

matters, relationships may be ruptured. Irritation can still be communicated in a quiet, friendly way. If really angry, it is better to walk away and wait until the anger has passed. Communication should be done quietly and in a relaxed manner.

Spatial Significance

Aborigines organise their use of space differently from the European-Australians who live with them. Fences and buildings mark privacy for non-Aborigines. Aborigines map private and public areas differently and a multitude of factors come into play here — the religious significance of some places, and this can change depending on whether a death has occurred or initiation or other ceremonies are in progress; the restraints imposed by some kin relationships and the freedom given by others, all of which differ from individual to individual. Signs of habitation in less frequented areas — camp fires, swag marks in the sand and belongings nearby — require people to keep at a distance, too.

In smaller settlements these mental maps are very well-known and drawn. It is part of learning to live in that community to learn one's own map for spatial movement. In larger communities, more no-man's areas exist. People are more dispersed and children, for example, often out of sight and hearing of kin. Petrol sniffing, vandalism and truancy occur partly for these reasons. For children, it is important in learning proper behaviour to be near to those who are responsible for them and for the members of a society to share this responsibility. One could say this about juvenile deviance in the wider Australian society, too. When we approach a house in our suburbs it is appropriate to go to the front door and ring or knock. This is too close in an Aboriginal community unless it is an emergency at night. When approaching a house or camp or group of people non-Aborigines should stand well back, wait and then call out for the person sought. Even when an outsider thinks he or she knows people well, it is better to wait until told where to sit, lest one chooses a quite inappropriate place to sit.

Well-trodden paths and thoroughfares in Aboriginal communities are fairly public and open to all. Even though these areas — especially living areas — are unfenced, there are still social 'maps' which govern movements between houses. One is acting correctly, however, to keep to well-used public areas. Best of all is an Aboriginal companion and all risk of invading private space is thereby avoided.

Personal Identity

One final point I will make here about the contrasts in socialisation between Aborigines and other Australians concerns how people identify. The personal name that is the prime identification label of European-Australians is of much less importance for Aborigines. Most have many personal names said to be too difficult for outsiders to pronounce so English names are adopted for convenience. More important labels are a child's local descent group identities, which allot him a place in his society's order of things, in ceremonies and relationships. Also important are the languages a child or person speaks and learns, the ceremonies he or she has participated in, their mother's country and

language and those of their spouse and children's spouses and so on. Each combination adds up to a unique identity. In many places sub-section and section labels will be used, too, and moiety affiliations. Few of these are ever used in school, office, hospital or work situations. Children growing up in their own local settings learn these and they are reinforced by others in their society. In connection with this, sex roles differ too from those prevailing in wider Australia and often expected in classrooms and job situations.

Learning in the School

Since we recognise so many of the Aboriginal styles of learning and teaching once they are pointed out, it is likely they are fairly characteristic of learning and teaching in any small-scale human society, including that of our own ancestors and ourselves, when not in the classroom but in a family or neighbourhood group. It seems clear that schools, as institutions, arose as a direct result of the requirements to learn how to read and write. It may be that four walls, a blackboard and slates, and a teacher are still the best way to learn those skills. We need more research to be sure of that.

However, schools as we know them today, and as we reproduce them in Aboriginal communities, have become far more complex. We require them to provide for our children what parents and family have always provided, an education which enables them to be competent adult members of our society. Professionals in education have long rejected this total responsibility and they are realistic in doing so. For example, no educationist today would disagree that school is only one of the educative agencies of a child's experience, and that the school reflects, or ought to reflect (and not form) and reinforces, or ought to reinforce, the values and norms of a child's society.

More forcibly than this, eloquent and documented research demonstrates the importance for a child in school of the culture of the group to which he or she belongs (see, for example, Faure, 1972:xxx; Holt, 1977:14). One can, for example, pick up any issue of *Unicorn* and find this point made explicitly or implicitly in most articles. As Anderson and others say about education in general:

> "Education research and planning must take account of the society in which the education takes place. This context is required to ensure that education is related to pertinent social issues and that educational and societal aims and objectives are congruent." (Anderson *et al*, 1976:11).

Social science shows that any institution depends for its function and continuance on its congruency with the society it serves. It is this requirement that makes us reluctant to consider Aborigines as possible educators of our children. Aborigines, however, are not given a choice about which to be reluctant. Disagreement among ourselves over what are the values and norms of our society, given its multicultural nature, are fairly common and will always occur when a single school system tries to act as an umbrella for many diverse groups. Within sub-cultures people can find more common ground. Many Aboriginal groups in Australia are not yet as confused as we are about either their values or their identity.

Some people, teachers among them, would argue that a school as we know it will never be able to offer Aboriginal children reinforcement of their values and that those traditional matters of such importance to Aboriginal identity ought to remain outside the school, in the community. I would argue that, even with Aboriginal control (and there are very few schools like this), the school is here to stay in Aboriginal communities, although it might well be restricted to the teaching of reading and writing only. As Bruner has said (1968:123): "The teacher imparts attitudes toward a subject and, indeed, attitudes toward learning itself", even when the subject is literacy or numeracy skills. And while this is so, we need to concern ourselves with making the school a better servant of Aboriginal aspirations for their children and a more congruent component of their own educational system than at present.

It is not only curriculum content that is at issue here, as I have tried to point out. Much has been done in recent years to correct this, even to admitting Aboriginal languages into the school in bilingual programs. The built environment of the school, its social structure and organisation, the role behaviours and expectations of people within it, do not change when content of a curriculum only changes nor, as we found in the Northern Territory, even when the language spoken in the school is changed — despite the many other positive results of that particular change.

Schools in Aboriginal communities are set down in the middle of one local social organisation and structure and a local culture. They represent small islands of a different and larger system, encompassing wider Australia. Teachers of Aboriginal students rarely stop to consider whether their school is reflecting and reinforcing Aboriginal values and norms, or their own. In fact, they are largely unaware of Aboriginal viewpoints on any subject, including the crucial area of concern which they share with Aboriginal parents — the education of Aboriginal children.

Certainly some of this changes when Aborigines have control of their own schools (see Snowdon, 1981). But I do not wish to go into this issue here. Rather I want to look at the prevailing system and how that can be improved.

When I suggest that profound changes in Aboriginal schools are necessary, I am not advocating that we throw the baby out with the bath water, so to speak. Education, as a discipline seeking understanding of how we learn and know, has made significant contributions to human knowledge. If a social theory is worth anything it applies to human behaviour everywhere, in general terms at least, and explains it. Let us turn now to a well-accepted theory of instruction which, properly applied, has implications for improving the acquisition of information and skills by Aboriginal children.

Applying Accepted Educational Theory to Aboriginal Schools

> Bruner states that: ". . . a theory of instruction concerns itself . . . with the issue of how best to utilise a given cultural pattern in achieving particular instructional ends." (1968:43).

He specified further that a theory of instruction has four major features:

". . . a theory of instruction should specify the experiences which most effectively implant in the individual a predisposition toward learning . . . for example, what sorts of relationships with people and things in the preschool environment will tend to make the child willing and able to learn when he enters school?
. . . a theory of instruction must specify the ways in which a body of knowledge should be structured so that it can be most readily grasped by the learner . . . structure must always be related to the status and gifts of the learner.
. . . a theory of instruction should specify the most effective sequences in which to present the material to be learned . . . a theory of instruction should specify the nature and pacing of rewards and punishments in the process of learning and teaching." (Bruner, 1968:40)

He goes on to elaborate these statements, particularly with reference to the preparation of curriculum materials. Predisposition, structure, sequence and reinforcement are the issues to be taken into account. He emphasises the importance of the relationship between instructor and student.

"If information is to be used effectively, it must be translated into the learner's way of attempting to solve a problem. If such translatability is not present, then the information is simply useless." (*ibid:* 53)

More than this, to insist on unfamiliar ways is to place students in humiliating, threatening and painful situations, where they cannot and will not learn.

Bruner makes the point very relevant in the Aboriginal context that in the modern world no one person or group of people can hold all the knowledge and skills necessary to be learned. Consequently economical techniques of instructing the young have been developed. Nonetheless, instruction can be built upon existing and proven problem-solving and learning techniques in any particular culture. What he calls hypothetical modes of teaching (1963:83) are ancient Aboriginal modes, too, and emphasise discovery and problem-solving in learning, rather than exposition.

No reason that I know of in Aboriginal culture and thought falsifies Bruner's theory of instruction at the level he has presented it. We need more information from Aboriginal life about particular forms of predisposition to learning, and existing structures and sequences of learning and reinforcement techniques. But some exists already (see Hamilton 1970; Harris, S. 1980; Brandl, various papers). Even more exists in the minds and experiences of Aboriginal teachers. Non-Aborigines are to some extent always prisoners of their own upbringing, just as their Aboriginal students are of theirs. Certainly non-Aborigines need to know and understand a lot more than they do about the aspirations and objectives of Aboriginal parents, but undoubtedly their most effective role will be not as a master or mistress of knowledge and instruction, but as an adviser, a partner to talk to and to encourage thinking (Faure, 1972:77).

Since education by itself is incapable of remedying the evils of society, it should strive to increase people's capacity to control their own destiny (Faure, 1972:82-3). An education for Aboriginal students which enables them to grow up 'in control of their own destiny' is not likely to be achieved by non-Aboriginal teachers alone and this paper is not suggesting that. Aboriginal teachers, parents and students, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal administrators, psychologists, paediatricians, anthropologists, employers and, no doubt, others share a right to guide and manage education. The tasks involve research and discussion in order to:

- fix educational policies and objectives
- establish and organise institutions
- finance and distribute resources
- define subject-matter
- handle problems of method and pedagogy
- recruit teachers
- deal with salaries and regulations
- evaluate results

(after Faure, 1972:78)

Some of the wider issues that need to be taken into account, too, in planning and establishing educational services for Aborigines — health, economy, welfare of the young — are described in detail in Stein (1965).

But the non-Aboriginal teacher is a crucial participant in the journey to a better education for Aboriginal youngsters. I began with a statement by Kit Elliott and an observation that our teachers in Aboriginal schools — in all but their geographical location — are, like he, isolated expatriates. I have attempted throughout to indicate ways of breaking down the isolation and I shall conclude with another statement from him:

> ". . . the task of the expatriate is only incidentally to teach what he knows, and what his values are. It is rather to use his special insights and intellectual training to enable his pupils to recognise, respect and come to terms with their own culture, and their rapidly changing environment. In this strange teaching situation, it is for the children to find out, and for the teachers to learn. It is for us an attempt to make up for centuries of arrogance by the humility with which we approach the ancient values of the children we teach." (Elliott, 1970:136).

Acknowledgements

Some of the data presented in this paper was gathered during fieldwork for the Aboriginal Children and Family Heritage Project, based at the Centre for Resource and Environmental Studies in Canberra, part of the Australian National University. The project is funded by the Australian Department of Social Security. Other data derives from fieldwork conducted for the Northern Land Council in Darwin. The author is indebted to discussions with the Aborigines of Belyuen, Yirrkala, Melville and Bathurst islands; Dr H.C. Coombs and Mr W. Snowdon of the Australian National University; Dr J. von Sturmer of the Australian Institute of Aboriginal Studies, Canberra; and non-Aboriginal teachers of Aboriginal children over a number of years.

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OUTSTATION EDUCATION IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

R. SIMS

The formation of outstations, or homeland centres, in many parts of the Northern Territory is a significant factor in the recent development of Aboriginal communities. Commencing in the 1960's in places as widely separated as Yirrkala, Oenpelli and Wave Hill Station, this decentralisation movement gained impetus in the 1970's following the recognition of Aboriginal Land Rights and the change in Federal Government policy to one of self-determination for Aboriginal people.

There are many reasons for the return of Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to their clan lands but the need for identification with their own country is seen by many as of paramount importance. This was emphasized by Stanner in his 1968 Boyer lectures:

> "When we took what we call 'land', we took what to them meant hearth, home, the source and locus of life and everlastingness of spirit." (1968:45)

A return to their own country provides Aboriginal people with the opportunity to resume aspects of their traditional life style which will synthesize and strengthen their own sense of identity. Shimpo (1978:59) cites the urge to re-establish religious links with the land and the need to restore traditional authority structures and socialization processes as strong motivating factors in the movement to outstations.

Another potent factor is a desire to avoid the social pressures of the larger communities such as missions and settlements and, freed from overt supervision, however benevolent, regain control of their own lives. Addressing the Perth ANZAAS Conference Coombs noted:

> "Missions and settlements tended to bring together multi-clan and, often, multi-language group communities. Such communities were, if maintained beyond the time appropriate to serve special and short-term purpose, alien to the Aboriginal way and created significant stresses among the groups forming them." (1973:1).

The permanence of outstations and their possible future development are debatable points. The answers naturally lie with the Aboriginal people themselves, although in the central regions of the Northern Territory fluctuating climatic conditions may dictate a modification of the movement. Shimpo (1978:59) feels that the withdrawal is temporary, a "breathing space" during which Aboriginal people may consider and assess the implications of recent change. Mark de Graaf, writing on decentralisation in Central and Western Australia, supports this view:

> "I believe the outstation movement to be a phase . . . Nevertheless, I

believe it to be an essential phase. It may not make altogether sense in terms of dollars and cents . . . I believe that to allow the movement to run its full course will be a relatively small cost to the Australian community as to assist in a small but meaningful way the Australian Aborigines in their bid for cultural continuity." (1976:3)

In 1978 the Department of Aboriginal Affairs in Darwin identified approximately 161 outstation communities in the Northern Territory. By 1981 the N.T. Department of Community Development was able to list more than 540 remote Aboriginal communities, many of which, with bores, air-strips and a number of durable buildings, are developing into stable village-type communities.

However, it would be simplistic to assume that outstations are evolving in a similar way or at the same pace. Developing in response to the felt needs of the people, outstation communities differ greatly, some remaining extremely simple while others have well-established gardens, a reliable power supply, all-weather airstrips, a school and a store. Nor is there necessarily any regional similarity. The main areas in the Northern Territory in which decentralisation has occurred are Oenpelli, Port Keats, Maningrida, Borroloola, Yirrkala and Ngukurr in the Top End, and Papunya, Docker River, Hermannsburg and Utopia Station in the Centre. Yet the contrast between two outstations in the Maningrida region can be as distinct as that between a Yirrkala homeland centre and an outstation situated west of Papunya.

Viewing decentralisation as essentially an Aboriginal initiative, response at Federal Government level, while neither encouraging nor discouraging the movement, has been supportive. The basis for this support is a recognition of the ". . . right of Aboriginal people to retain their racial identity and traditional life style, or where desired, modify it" (Department of Aboriginal Affairs, 1977). Policies have evolved which provide the goal of self-management for Aboriginal communities so that they may achieve self-sufficiency with the minimum of outside help. The Department of Aboriginal Affairs provides such physical facilities as are consistent with the promotion of self-sufficiency and encourages the provision of services by group members where possible (D.A.A., 1977).

In delivering the minimum of services, where requested, departmental administrators faced with these constraints and the inaccessibility of many Aboriginal communities have demonstrated considerable imagination and flexibility. School education is not generally seen by Aboriginal people as a priority (Shimpo, 1978:135). Indeed experiences of the recent past have led many to view it as a threat to traditional values and the cause of cultural and social dissonance. However, during the early years of decentralisation the N.T. Department of Education received requests for educational services from several outstation communities. Such requests in the early 1970's were few in number, coming from Yai Yai, west of Papunya, Wattie Creek, near Wave Hill Station and Gumarderr in the region of Oenpelli. In 1978 the number of outstations receiving educational services had increased to 44 and, in 1981, more than 70 outstation schools could be functioning.

Outstation groups usually consist of the clan leader, or traditional land-owner, with members of his immediate and extended families. The average size of outstation populations is between 30 and 40 (Shimpo, 1978:58) and informed observers report that when the number becomes greater, there is a tendency for a splinter group to form and move away to establish another outstation elsewhere. In the early days of decentralisation it was common to find that outstation groups were composed of the middle-aged to elderly and the very young but, more recently, with the presence of teenagers and young adults, outstation populations are more truly representative of all age groups. Children of school age form a disparate group, with regard to age and ability, and the number may range from 6 to as many as 30.

When considering the establishment of a school the members of the outstation communities enter into discussions with representatives of the Department of Education. Such periods of negotiation may be lengthy. The Department of Education, while responding sympathetically and positively when requests for educational services prove to be 'deep-felt' and genuine, does not promote the foundation of schools in outstations as this would be contrary to the basic tenets of self-determination. The degree of a community's commitment to the concept of schooling is evident in the preparation by the group of a school site and the erection of a suitable shelter or building. As the permanent presence of a non-Aboriginal teacher is rarely desired, the outstation community generally elect a member of its own group to fulfil the role of teacher. In so doing they choose a person who is literate in English and has received formal schooling. However, most communities welcome assistance from an outside teacher who may visit the school at weekly or fortnightly intervals. The N.T. Department of Education facilitates this supportive service by creating positions for itinerant teachers to work between central schools and regional outstation schools and by providing them with dependable means of transport.

The role of an itinerant or visiting teacher, calls for special qualities: the ability to work with and advise the outstation teacher while maintaining a low profile, the sensitivity to operate effectively as a guest teacher in a delicate, cross-cultural situation, and a firm sense of purpose. Usually a native speaker of English, the visiting teacher can make a valuable contribution to oral English sessions in the school and, where a pupil booklet scheme such as the *School of the Bush* curriculum series is in use, can assist the outstation teacher in its successful implementation. It is a demanding and sometimes onerous role but it is also full of interest and challenge.

To fit in with the life-style of the community, outstation school programs are often of only 2-3 hours duration although, as with the composition and development of outstations, this varies considerably from one outstation school to another. A few follow accepted school hours but others may have a broken program, with a 2-hour period of schooling early in the morning and a further 1-2 hour session in the cooler part of the late afternoon. However, education is continuous in the sense that the children move directly from the school sessions to pursuits and activities which are intrinsically Aboriginal and part of the outstation milieu.

In response to the clearly expressed needs of outstation communities, the school program centres upon the attainment of skills in the 3R's and competence in spoken English. During recent years the N.T. Department of Education has developed a curriculum for outstation schools which uses "distance teaching" techniques and offers a fundamental program in the basic skills, ranging in ability level from transition to approximately primary grade four. Consisting of 126 Units, which combine pupil workbooks with easily interpreted instructions for the outstation teachers, the series is presented in English but allows for the use of both the relevant Aboriginal language and English. Although this perceived need to provide outstation children with "survival" skills is essentially practical from the community's point of view, in an educational context such a program, based on a language which is not the community's mother tongue and monitored by untrained teachers, has obvious limitations. It is the responsibility of the Department of Education to make outstation communities aware of these. James Eedle, a former Secretary of the Department of Education, stated his concern:

> ". . . An increasing number of outstations are asking for schools. This is a matter of concern for the Department because it is not possible to provide in outstations a quality of education in the basic skills equivalent to that given by an established school." (1977:3).

These difficulties and restrictions are very apparent but the gravity of these must surely depend upon one's cultural viewpoint.

It is significant that the establishment of outstation schools is an entirely spontaneous act on the part of Aboriginal people and the first move of their own volition towards schooling for their children. Communities have recognized the need to prepare their children to operate effectively both in their own and in the wider Australian community and have initiated action to achieve these aims. Of equal significance is the concern on the part of outstation members as to the content of outstation school programs and their stated preference for the teacher to be a member of their own community. Such developments have important implications for non-Aboriginal educators. The Aboriginal people are indicating that they know where their children are and where they want them to be (Gwee, 1979:3).

Outstation schools could be viewed as typifying the problems of the isolated in education. This paper has considered some of the constraints. Yet, as all things are relative, so the degree of isolation is determined by one's point of view. For the outstation pupil there are many advantages and, while it would be irresponsible to rhapsodize about these positive aspects, they are important in the context of current changes in Aboriginal education in the Northern Territory.

Evolving directly from community decision-making, outstation schools can only exist and develop where there is constant and active parental involvement and support. The school, then, is an integral part of the community and not an alien, potentially divisive institution and this is

reflected in the reportedly high attendance rate among outstation school pupils.

For the residents of outstations geographic isolation is one of choice and, by returning to their own clan country, they are re-affirming traditional beliefs and values which have their origin in a close association with the land. The outstation child thus gains spiritual and psychological sustenance from a harmonious atmosphere which ensures cultural continuity.

Members of outstation communities have achieved a realistic accommodation between their own culture and that of the dominant society. The degree and depth of such an accommodation varies between communities but it is essentially pragmatic and has been accomplished without the social stresses which are so evident in some of the larger Aboriginal communities. The outstation pupil, unconsciously absorbing this accommodation so that it becomes an integral part of his conception of the world, moves easily between the outstation school and community activities, the one complementing the other and forming a firm base for the growth of the child's identity.

Although not officially bilingual, a realistic assessment of outstation education accepts that the medium of instruction in many schools must be the local Aboriginal language. The outstation pupil therefore often learns through his mother tongue which provides a sound foundation for cognitive growth and conceptual development and reinforces and validates the child's own world view. Notwithstanding this, the general request for skills in English is sincere and practical, and literacy and oracy in English are taught in the school, sometimes using an E.F.L. approach. It is important to note that it is possible for a monolingual English speaker to communicate successfully with outstation pupils and, at some level, with most adult members of the community. Knowledge of English is recognized as the necessary tool for meaningful negotiation and as a *lingua franca* between members of disparate language-speaking groups.

Apart from occasional crises, in which the health of members may be at risk, the outstation communities seem little troubled by the rigours of isolation. It is obvious from the numbers of Aboriginal children in the Northern Territory who are not enrolled in schools (Green Paper, 1981:1) that many are content with traditional forms of education and, as yet, see little value in schooling. With Toyota 4-wheel-drive vehicles and serviceable airstrips, transport in most communities is not a problem and many outstation groups are very mobile. Where schools are established the continuity of the school program tends to stabilize the group and, conversely, the more stable groups are those which request the Department of Education for support services. Social welfare payments, for which all Australians are eligible, and wages and salaries finance the groups which, according to their region, enjoy a diet of staple, European foods such as flour, oats, tea, milk, sugar and fruit supplemented by kangaroo, emu, buffalo and fish and a wide variety of bush foods. Health, particularly among the children, is good and morale is high so that it is common to hear outstation people express pity for those who remain in the larger, central communities.

The people most aware of the many daunting aspects of isolation are probably those who are responsible for the delivery of services to outstation communities. In terms of educational services one could cite the visiting teacher, often isolated professionally by the very nature of the work, driving long distances over difficult and little-used tracks or the pilot, negotiating small craft onto short, uneven runways. There is also the curriculum developer grappling, within unknown parameters, to produce a viable program which will educate children in remote communities without threatening their cultural and linguistic soundness. Another involved officer is the education advisor who must operate with acceptable credibility in a cross-cultural situation fraught with the dangers of mis-judgement and misunderstanding. Directing all these activities is the administrator who, while organizing the most suitable placement of teaching staff and a satisfactory means of payment, is conscious always of educational accountability and must ensure that in developing a suitable program for outstation schools a full range of educational options remains available for pupils who may wish to make further progress elsewhere.

Whether it is merely a phase in community development or a "breathing space" the Aboriginal decentralisation movement in the Northern Territory shows no signs of diminishing and many remote communities are assuming aspects of permanence. There is also a marked increase in the number of outstations requesting educational services. The effects of isolation upon education may vary according to one's point of view, but efforts to ameliorate these effects are already emerging. Some of these come from the Aboriginal people. Several communities have accepted the idea of the permanent presence in their group of non-Aboriginal teachers and outstation schools at Yarralin (V.R.D.), Djembere (Elsey), Gochan Jiny-Jirra (Maningrida) and Peppimenarti have now become 1 and 2 teacher schools, with trained teaching staff. As outstation teachers are for many reasons reluctant to leave their communities to gain training, there are now firm plans to take training courses to them in their own outstations. Such courses, which will be based on the Aboriginal Teacher Education Centre teacher-training program at Batchelor, will be conducted by visiting lecturers.

Another recent development has been the active involvement of outstation teachers in workshops, some of which have been convened at their special request. This year some of the workshop activities will be planned and conducted by outstation teachers and it is hoped that their knowledge and opinions will contribute greatly to the revision and restructuring of the curriculum for outstation schools.

In conclusion, the following extract from a Departmental report makes some interesting comments on outstation education:

> ". . . Are outstation schools a success? Who can say? They have already shown a more stable attendance of children than the settlement schools, probably because parents and children are involved together. It is *their* school . . . They may leave something to be desired academically but, psychologically and culturally, they have much to offer." (Department of Education, 1976).

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AN EVALUATION OF EARLY EDUCATION PROGRAMMES FOR ABORIGINAL CHILDREN

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This paper summarises the outcomes of a major review that was commissioned and funded by the Bernard van Leer Foundation. The full text was published in late 1981 in the form of a book-length monograph:

> Teasdale, G.R. and Whitelaw, A.J. *The early childhood education of Aboriginal Australians: a review of six action-research projects.* Bernard van Leer Foundation Monograph Series. Melbourne: Australian Council for Educational Research, 1981.

We wish to record our indebtedness to the many people around Australia who helped us with our evaluation. Interviews invariably took place in an atmosphere of openness and cooperation, and we are most appreciative of the extensive assistance provided by each of the sixty or more people with whom discussions were held. The support and interest of staff of the Bernard van Leer Foundation is recorded with appreciation, especially that of Professor Hugh Philp, Foundation consultant for Asia and the Pacific. We also acknowledge with thanks the help of the Australian Department of Aboriginal Affairs.

Introduction

During the 1960s there emerged a new awareness throughout the western world of the importance of early child development. In educational terms a firm foundation in the first five years was considered essential for later success in the school system, especially for children from backgrounds described as "underprivileged" or "disadvantaged". Hence the provision of effective early education programmes assumed a new sense of urgency, and public funding became widely available for this purpose.

Within Australia the field of early childhood became a prime focus for educational research and development. Inevitably these initiatives carried over into the field of Aboriginal education, for it was becoming increasingly clear that Aboriginal children were not succeeding in the centralised, white-oriented systems of education in each state. A new approach was needed, and the field of early childhood seemed to offer the greatest opportunity for achieving a significant improvement. Several groups of educators around the country therefore initiated action-research projects in an attempt to develop more effective early childhood programmes for Aboriginal Australians.

After careful review we have been able to identify six projects of this kind, all of which commenced during 1969-70. In selecting projects we have tried to include only those that catered for the educational and social welfare needs of young Aboriginal children and their families. We were not interested in programmes aimed at fitting Aborigines into existing educational structures and policies.

Details of the six projects selected are set out in summary form on the following page. It is the purpose of this paper to examine the major outcomes and achievements of each project, and to comment on their wider impact. First, however, it is important to examine briefly the theoretical contexts from which the projects developed. Three major sources of influence can be identified.

PROJECT	ADMINISTRATIVE BASE	PRINCIPAL SOURCES OF FUNDING	DURATION	APPROXIMATE AGE LEVELS OF CHILDREN	BASIC APPROACH	MAJOR PRACTICAL OUTCOME
Bourke	Department of Psychiatry, University of New South Wales	(i) Private enterprise (ii) Australian Government	1969 — continuing	4 to 5 years	Compensatory education. A structured pre-school program designed to enrich children's language, number and conceptual development.	Establishment of an on-going pre-school for Aboriginal and white children in Bourke.
New South Wales	Department of Adult Education, University of Sydney	(i) van Leer Foundation (ii) NSW and Australian Governments	1969 — 1974	0 to 5 years	Family education. Parents given support and training so that they could be fellow learners with each other and with their children.	Establishment of the NSW AFEC Federation as an all Aboriginal organisation concerned with developing Aboriginal identity via programs of family education.
Victoria	Faculty of Education, Monash University	(i) van Leer Foundation (ii) Victorian Government	1969 — 1972	2 to 5 years	No firm commitment to any one approach. Home based teaching sessions conducted by trained teachers became the predominant pattern.	A series of basic recommendations regarding the provision of early childhood services to the Aboriginal people of Victoria.
South Australia	School of Social Sciences, Flinders University	van Leer Foundation	1969 — 1971	3 to 5 years	Compensatory education, with an attempt to incorporate family education in a conventional pre-school setting.	Close liaison with the SA Department of Education in the establishment of both pre-schools as ongoing ventures.
Katherine	Committee representing various government departments	Australian Government	1970 — 1973	4 to 8 + years	A broad-based attack on the problem of school failure, with emphasis on communication skills, home-school liaison, health care and community involvement.	Substantial improvement in the quality of schooling at all levels in the Katherine community.
Queensland	Queensland Department of Education	(i) van Leer Foundation (ii) Queensland Government	1969 — continuing	5 to 8 years	Language development via an elaborate and carefully sequenced program of instruction covering the first three years of formal schooling.	The production of a language program incorporating all other aspects of the school curriculum in an integrated approach.

The New Zealand Folk Movement

Early in the 1960s Maori communities became extensively involved in the provision of play centres, and programmes were developed that blended with Maori cultural values and mores. The essential feature was parental control and responsibility: groups of parents met together to establish, organise, equip and maintain centres for their own children. Grey (1976) has described this development as a "family-oriented folk movement that acknowledged the central role of education in the lives of individual parents and grandparents, equally with its role in the life of the individual child, of the family, and of the community or neighbourhood." This philosophy of family participation and responsibility struck a responsive chord in Aboriginal communities, especially in NSW, and visiting groups of Maori educators played a significant role in establishing the van Leer project in that state.

The North American Compensatory Education Approach

The second source of influence was almost diametrically opposed to the first, especially in terms of its educational implications. It had its origins in North America during the early 1960s, and arose from the perceived failure of the education system to cater for children from lower working class and minority backgrounds. The basic problem was believed to be one of retarded intellectual development due to lack of early environmental stimulation. The solution seemed quite straightforward: provide compensatory experiences via intensive pre-school enrichment programmes. The compensatory education movement had an undoubted influence in Australia, particularly during the late 1960s when the six projects were being established. Paradoxically, in fact, its influence probably was strongest at just the time when North American educationists were modifying their earlier optimism and realising that the issues were not as simple and clear cut as had been assumed.

Traditional Australian Approaches to Early Education

These undoubtedly had a pervasive influence on most projects. The basic features have been summarised by Scott and Darbyshire (1973). Programmes have been more heavily influenced by teachers' observations of each child's general progress and current interests rather than by some common, sequenced curriculum for all children; there has been concern with all main areas of development, rather than concentration on a narrower range of skills more directly related to academic progress; a high value has been placed on activities which allow for creative effort and for the sharing of ideas; self-initiated play has been considered an important source of learning; qualified teachers have been employed; and parents have been in active communication with teachers, but not usually responsible for taking a teaching role in the programme.

Differential Impact

The above sources of influence had a differential impact on the development of each project. Two of the projects — Bourke and NSW van Leer — were relatively free of any outside constraints, and the coordinators were able to develop an independent stance. In both cases a very strong commitment was made to a specific philosophy. Aspects of the North American compensatory approach were dominant at Bourke (see, for

example, Nurcombe and Moffitt, 1970; Nurcombe, 1976), while the NSW van Leer project was based almost exclusively on the New Zealand folk movement (Grey, 1974). The Victorian van Leer project also was reasonably free of organisational constraints, but in contrast to the other projects avoided any commitment to a particular philosophy, preferring the more basic starting-point of defining issues and developing an independent frame of reference (Scott and Darbyshire, 1973).

In the remaining projects the influences were more evenly spread. In South Australia, despite the fact that the compensatory education and folk movement approaches appear antithetical, an attempt was made to incorporate the two in a single statement of purpose (Richardson and Teasdale, 1973). The union was an uneasy one, however, and led to some ambiguity and uncertainty. The Katherine and Queensland projects both were based within government departments of education, and therefore were influenced more strongly by traditional philosophies (Hillas, 1974; Dwyer, 1976). During the early stages they also incorporated aspects of the compensatory education approach, although this influence weakened as the projects progressed, especially in Queensland.

Despite their wide difference in rationale and approach, the projects did share a common starting point: the belief that some form of early childhood provision offered the best solution to the intransigent problem of school failure amongst Aboriginal children. Particularly during the early years staff of the various projects approached their task with vigour and excitement, believing that at long last they were doing something effective to improve the lot of Aboriginal Australians.

Interestingly, as time went by, the folk movement philosophy of the NSW project came to have an increasingly pervasive influence on the other projects. Worldwide trends away from notions of deficit and compensation and towards parent education and family support undoubtedly contributed to this shift in emphasis. Nevertheless, the impact of the NSW project itself must not be underrated.

Outcomes and Achievements

Having set the projects in their wider theoretical context an assessment now will be made of their major outcomes and achievements. The most logical starting point for such a task is the evaluation made by personnel of each project. Although all of the projects had a research component, evaluation generally was their most disappointing feature. It seems that so much time and energy were expended on programme development and implementation that formal evaluation was squeezed in almost as an afterthought, or because it was required by funding authorities. Furthermore, most researchers adopted an unimaginative approach to evaluation, making little effort to develop procedures and instruments that suited their particular needs. Lex Grey, for example, seemed more concerned to criticise conventional techniques than to develop other systematic forms of assessment that dovetailed with folk movement philosophies, while staff of most other projects seemed quite content to follow the well-trodden path of psychometric testing. In fact,

evaluation of most of the projects was based almost exclusively on individual testing of children using instruments that had been developed and standardised with white populations in North America.

Given the generally low level of research output, what can be concluded about project achievements on the basis of objectively measured outcomes? The answer is simple: very little indeed. The only reliable conclusion one can draw is that the activities of the Bourke project, and of the Victorian, South Australian and Queensland van Leer projects, enhanced the language and/or cognitive development of the children participating, at least in the short term. And even this conclusion can be supported only to the extent that one is prepared to accept assessment procedures based almost exclusively on standardised testing. There is no firm evidence of the persistence of these language and cognitive gains beyond the first three or four years of schooling, nor have any data been published on the longer term effects of these projects on school achievement generally.

Seen from any perspective these are meagre outcomes. They represent a poor return for the hundreds of thousands of dollars invested in the projects, and an even poorer return for the amount of human effort expended. Yet the problem lies with the research, and not with the projects themselves. It is clear to us that the lack of objectively measured outcomes is *not* the result of ineffective programmes, but of ineffective and incomplete evaluation. The story becomes more encouraging, therefore, when one turns to a wider and more subjective review of project achievements. These will be considered in relation to the children, the schools, the parents, the teachers, the programmes, and the community.

The Children

In addition to the research evidence noted above, staff of all six projects reported that their programmes had positive effects on the children's general academic and social development. Benefits accruing to the children who participated in the various projects included one or more of the following: easier and more rapid adjustment to formal schooling; behaviour at school less shy and withdrawn; clearer and more fluent speech; improvements in general health and nutrition; more effective socialisation with peers and adults; and more regular attendance at school. Although the evidence for these improvements is based largely on impressionistic reporting, there is little reason to doubt that the majority of children who participated in the projects did benefit in some way. In particular, it seems likely that involvement in the projects enhanced their performance at school, at least in the early years.

The Schools

An important outcome of some projects was the actual establishment of early childhood facilities in particular locations: the Bourke pre-school, the NSW family education centres, and the two pre-schools in South Australia. Additionally, the project at Katherine led to the consolidation of pre-school facilities there, and to the wider participation of Aboriginal parents and children, while the schools at Cherbourg and Palm Island received a substantial input of physical and human resources as a direct result of being

selected as bases for the Queensland project. While bricks and mortar are not necessarily a good criterion of success, the provision of physical facilities certainly enhanced the opportunity for many Aboriginal children to participate in early childhood programmes. The centres themselves therefore should not be overlooked as achievements in their own right.

The Parents

All projects made some attempt to involve parents in their programmes, believing that this would enhance parental understanding of child development and thus contribute to a more educative home environment. The NSW project, however, was the only one that had a prime commitment to parental involvement right from the start. The others soon began to follow suit, although none went as far as NSW in offering full parental responsibility. Staff of the Victorian van Leer project, for example, moved almost exclusively to home-based teaching sessions during their final year, while at Bourke a home visiting programme was introduced in order to consolidate the work of the pre-school.

It appears that the projects were successful in achieving their objectives in this area. Subjective reports indicate increasing levels of parental participation, more openness in discussions between parents and teachers, a greater interest in the educational programme, and more cooperation in ensuring prompt and regular attendance by children. In the longer term, once children had left the projects, parents became less fearful about making contact with their child's teachers. In Victoria, for example, teachers believe that greater willingness amongst Aboriginal parents to visit schools and discuss their children's progress can be attributed directly to the influence of the project.

The Teachers

Reports from the Victorian, Katherine and Queensland projects highlighted personal growth amongst teachers as a significant achievement. It was felt that teachers' attitudes and perceptions underwent positive change, making them more sensitive to the needs of their Aboriginal pupils. This had a ripple effect as teachers interacted with colleagues in other schools, or were transferred to other locations. Positive effects also accrued when project schools were used for practice teaching purposes by teacher training institutions.

The Programmes

Another important outcome for some projects was the production of a teaching programme that could be adapted for use in other contexts. In South Australia the pre-school programmes prepared by project staff were used as a foundation for the curriculum in other Aboriginal pre-schools in that state. The various experimental programmes at Bourke also were important achievements, although it is disappointing that they have never been published and so have not been used widely elsewhere. The Queensland language programme, of course, represents a very important achievement indeed. The first year handbooks have been distributed throughout Australia and have

been used in a variety of early childhood contexts, both Aboriginal and white. Likewise the parent workbooks of the NSW van Leer project have attracted considerable interest, along with the supplementary tapes, slides and discussion booklets.

The Community

Written into the objectives of most projects was the goal of family and community development. It is difficult to assess the impact in this area, however, for none of the projects attempted any systematic evaluation, and follow-up reports were particularly anecdotal and subjective.

The NSW van Leer project undoubtedly did have an important influence on local communities, for enrichment in this area was at the core of its philosophy. Ross (1973), in his review of the project, identified it as an incipient social movement with the potential to integrate communities, strengthen the morale of the group, and allow increasing self-determination. Follow-up discussions with the leaders of the AFEC Federation confirm that this potential is being realised in some communities as Aboriginal people become more confident in themselves and accept responsibility for their own affairs.

The main contribution of other projects lay in the development of Aboriginal teacher-assistant schemes. Faced with the problem of school-community liaison, Aboriginal people were employed to work in the schools as classroom assistants. At the Bourke pre-school, for example, the Aboriginal aides consistently have provided a strong and effective link with the local community. In Queensland, supplementary funding was obtained to develop a classroom assistant scheme which proved to be singularly successful in strengthening school-community bonds, so much so that it soon became implemented in all Aboriginal schools throughout the state.

Conclusion

Despite limited research evidence it is clear that the projects made an important contribution to the lives of the children and parents who participated, as well as sensitising teachers to the culture and lifestyle of the Aboriginal people, and encouraging greater community awareness and involvement in the work of the schools. Additionally, the establishment of facilities and the development of teaching programmes may be viewed as important outcomes in their own right.

Having summarised the major outcomes of the projects, we turn next to their wider impact on the field of Aboriginal education.

The Wider Influence

A full assessment of the influence of the projects requires some understanding of major developments in the field of Aboriginal education during the past twenty years. As noted earlier, relatively slow progress was being made during the 1960s, especially in the provision of pre-school education. One of the few exceptions was in the Northern Territory, where the

Australian government was providing considerable financial support, a relatively innovative programme had been developed, and by 1967 over 250 Aboriginal children were being enrolled each year in pre-schools (Dunn and Tatz, 1969).

In the early 1970s the situation changed dramatically when the Australian government began making funds available to the states for Aboriginal pre-school education. State authorities were invited to submit plans for the phasing-in of pre-school facilities for all Aboriginal children over a five year period, funding being provided for the construction of buildings and the employment of advisory teachers. There was a flurry of activity as submissions were prepared, buildings planned, teachers appointed, and the inevitable administrative machinery set up.

During the following years there was continued expansion and consolidation, and pre-school provisions are now available for most Aboriginal children in Australia. Although these provisions vary in their nature and extent from state to state, they share a number of common features. Parental and community involvement is strongly encouraged. Devolution of responsibility to parents, however, has not occurred, except in isolated instances. Programming is relatively traditional and conservative, the primary aim being to prepare children for formal schooling. Nevertheless, programmes increasingly have reflected a sensitivity to Aboriginal culture, language and lifestyle. The employment of Aboriginal teachers and teaching assistants is an established feature of most pre-schools attended by Aboriginal children.

Having summarised the major trends two basic questions arise: What influence have the six projects had on the above developments? And what has been achieved as a result of all this activity?

The expansion of Aboriginal pre-school facilities was the direct result of a change in Australian government policy. At some stage during 1970 or early 1971 a decision was taken to collaborate with the states by providing funds for capital developments and for some resource personnel. The real motivation for government decisions of this kind is seldom revealed. In this case the 1967 referendum had paved the way by giving the federal government power to act in the field of Aboriginal welfare, but specific reasons for the decision can only be surmised. In Australia at that time there was growing social concern about the inadequacy of welfare provisions for Aborigines in the fields of health, housing and education. Furthermore, within educational and social welfare circles there was a great deal of interest in early childhood services, most professionals believing this to be the logical starting point for action. It therefore was politically expedient for the government to act as it did, and the move attracted a good deal of favourable publicity despite some criticism that Aborigines were being given privileges not available to whites.

What role did the projects play in these developments? It is noteworthy that during this period there were no undertakings of similar size or scope in other fields of Aboriginal education and welfare. The six projects together

provided the major innovative thrust, and therefore attracted considerable interest. They were a practical demonstration of the kinds of development that most professionals thought desirable.

We believe the projects served two functions at this time: they accelerated government action in the field of Aboriginal education and they focused interest at the early childhood level. Undoubtedly the government would have acted even had the projects not existed, but developments might not have been so rapid, nor so strongly directed to the pre-school. Few governments are likely to stand by and let private enterprise gain all the kudos from an apparently successful venture. In this particular instance there were several ventures succeeding in the same field, there was strong professional interest and support, and there was pressure from other groups seeking funding for similar endeavours. It seems inevitable, therefore, that the projects did provide some of the impetus for Australian government involvement.

The projects also had a wider role to play during this period of rapid expansion. They stimulated debate about underlying issues and philosophies, forcing people to think more deeply about their own approach to the early education of Aboriginal children. The widely divergent philosophies of the Bourke and NSW van Leer projects, for example, attracted a great deal of interest amongst educationists. Staff of the two projects were strongly committed to their respective viewpoints, and one could not read their writings and view their documentary films without being challenged to clarify one's own beliefs and adopt a personal stance towards the issues involved.

The teaching programmes developed within some projects had an important influence on curriculum development in Aboriginal education. The Queensland language programme, for example, was adopted in Aboriginal schools throughout the state, and also had a major impact on the language arts curriculum for all primary schools in Queensland. Curricula for Aboriginal schools in the Northern Territory, South Australia and Western Australia likewise were influenced quite strongly by the Queensland programme, and some use also was made of the parent education materials developed by Lex Grey in NSW.

Project schools in Queensland, South Australia and Bourke were amongst the first in Australia to use Aboriginal teaching assistants in a systematic way. It seems likely, then, that these projects helped to accelerate the adoption of this scheme across the country.

As pre-school facilities for Aboriginal children expanded around Australia, the involvement of parents became one of their more prominent features. We believe this can be attributed in part to the influence of the NSW van Leer project. Lex Grey succeeded in implementing a parent-based programme just before parental participation achieved popularity as an educational movement in Australia. He therefore was providing a practical demonstration at a most propitious time, and though few people fully understood his philosophy, and fewer still were prepared to accept his concept of complete parental responsibility, his work did stimulate wide interest in the

idea of parents sharing in the activities of the pre-school.

Finally, the projects must have had at least a slight influence on the process of attitude change within Australia. During the past decade there has been a growing recognition of the integrity of minority cultures, and an increased awareness of the contribution that Aborigines can make to Australian society. The staff of most projects themselves went through this process of attitude change, developing a deeper appreciation of Aboriginal culture and lifeways, and thus becoming increasingly sensitive and supportive in their work with Aboriginal people. Positive attitudes undoubtedly were communicated in project writings, films, radio broadcasts and public lectures, as well as in day-to-day contacts with people in the various communities. The projects also were studied in detail by students in many teacher training institutions, thus providing new insights and understanding.

In summary, it is clear that the projects to varying degrees did have an influence on the field of Aboriginal education, particularly during the early 1970s when the early education movement was developing at such a rapid rate. But what has been achieved as a result of all this activity? Has it solved the problem of school failure amongst Aboriginal children?

The simple answer to the latter question is no. The latest research findings are quite clear: many Aboriginal children are still not succeeding in the Australian school system. While the problem of school failure has not been solved, however, considerable progress has been made towards a solution, especially at the early childhood level. It would be totally unrealistic to expect such a major problem to be overcome in the short space of ten or twelve years; indeed it may be unrealistic ever to expect a complete solution. In retrospect, the degree of progress during the past decade has been impressive. In 1971 relatively few Aboriginal children were attending pre-school, there was minimal government support, and programmes generally were watered-down versions of the traditional curriculum for middle-class white children. Now, in 1981, pre-school facilities are available for most Aboriginal children, state and federal governments have accepted a major funding role, parent and community involvement have become established features of most pre-schools, and programmes increasingly are dovetailing with the culture and lifestyle of local Aboriginal communities. Considerable improvements also have taken place in the quality of primary schooling, especially in the early grades.

In summary, then, we believe that more progress has taken place in the early childhood education of Aboriginal Australians since 1971 than took place during the whole period of white settlement prior to that time. Furthermore, we believe that each of the six projects to varying degrees influenced the nature and extent of the progress that occurred. Without the projects, developments probably would have been slower, less innovative, and less parent and community oriented.

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